

TALES OF THE AMBER SEA

FAIRY TALES OF THE PEOPLES OF ESTONIA, LATVIA AND LITHUANIA









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ESTONIAN FAIRY TALES







THE MOSQUITO AND THE HORSE

One day a horse was out grazing in the field when a mosquito flew up to him.

Said the mosquito, seeing that the horse did not notice him: "Don't you see me, Horse?"

"I see you now," the horse replied.

The mosquito looked over the horse—he looked at his tail, his back, his hoofs, his neck and at both his ears, one after the other. He looked and he shook his head.

"You're terribly big, friend, aren't you!" said he. "Well, yes, I'm not what you'd call small," agreed the horse with a nod.

"I am much smaller than you."

"You are indeed!"

"And you must be strong, too?"

"Strong enough."

"I don't suppose a fly could get the better of you, could it?"

"Certainly not!"

"Nor a horse-fly?"

"Nor a horse-fly."

"Nor even a gadfly?"

"No. Nor even a gadfly."

The mosquito was pleased.

"The horse is strong but I'm even stronger,"

thought he, and, sticking out his chest, said:

"You may be big and strong, Horse, but we mosquitoes are stronger still. We need only light into you, and you'll be done for. We'll win hands down!"

"No, you won't!" said the horse.

"Yes, we will!"

"No!"

"Yes!"

They went on like that for an hour and then another, but neither would let the other have the last word.

"It's no use arguing," said the horse at last. "We can have it out between us and see who wins!"

"Yes, let's do that!" the mosquito agreed.

He rose from where he had been sitting on the horse's back and called in a piping voice:

"Hey, there, mosquitoes, fly here."

And at this so many mosquitoes came flying toward him as cannot be imagined! From a birch wood they flew, and from a spruce grove, from the swamps, and the pond, and the river, and they all flew straight at the horse. They settled all over him and clung to his body, and the horse asked:

"Well, are all of you here now?"

"All!" replied the first mosquito who was a bully if there ever was one.

"And has each found a place for himself?"

"Yes!"

"Then hold on fast!" said the horse.

He flung himself down on his back, his hoofs sticking up in the air, and began rolling from side to side, and in less than a minute he had squashed all the mosquitoes. Of the whole mighty host only one little soldier was left alive, and even so his wings were grazed, and, apart from him, the bully who had been sitting some distance away from the rest. That is always the way with bullies: they start a fight and then steal off and don't take part in it.

The little soldier who had only just managed to fly away from the horse now flew up to the bully, and, addressing him as if he were a general, reported:

"The horse is dead! He was killed on the spot! Had we had only four more men we might have clung to his hoofs and skinned him."

"Good work!" said the bully, and off he flew to the forest in all haste in order to notify the bugs and the gnats of the victory. For this was no joke! The mosquitoes had vanquished a horse, so surely their tribe was the mightiest of all the tribes on earth!



HOW A RAVEN WOOED A TOMTIT

Once there was a Raven who fell in love with a Tomtit and badly wanted to marry her. Now, for her part, the Tomtit liked the Raven, too, so she invited him to her house and began regaling him with food and drink.

"Why are you so small?" the Raven asked. "I'm not yet fully grown," the Tomtit replied.

"You're not?" the Raven said, pleased. "Then that means that you'll grow bigger, doesn't it?"

"Of course!" the Tomtit said. "How could it be otherwise?"

They are and they drank, and the Tomtit felt so bored that she could not keep back a yawn.

"Tell me something interesting," said she to the

Raven. "If you don't, I'll fall asleep."

"I know many interesting things," said the Raven. "There is a village beyond the forest. My uncle flew there once and saw a bean stalk there. So tall was this bean stalk that a snail could crawl up it to the very clouds and hide there from the heat."

"That's nothing!" said the Tomtit. "The year before last I saw a bean stalk so tall that a cricket climbed up it to the sky and lighted his pipe at the sun."

The Raven thought hard. He wanted very much to

think of something interesting.

"I've just remembered something!" said he. "Three years ago such a strong wind rose in this same village beyond the forest that the people there grew accustomed to crawling on all fours. Half a year passed before they went back to walking in the old way again."

"That's nothing!" the Tomtit said. "Five years ago the wind was even stronger. So fast did the arms of the windmills turn that you could hardly see them."

The Raven thought hard again. He was very eager

indeed to think of something still more interesting.

"I've just remembered something!" said he. "Ten years ago the frost was so fierce that all the spruce-trees in the forest cracked from top to bottom."

"That's nothing!" said the Tomtit, standing her ground. "Twelve years ago when I bade my third brood of fledgelings goodbye the frost was even

fiercer. Why, the women's hands froze to the dough they were kneading, and the pots on the stoves boiled at one end and were covered with ice at the other."

The Raven looked troubled.

"Anything might have happened in the old days," he brought out at last with a sigh. And saying that he would be right back, he left the house and flew away.

He did not know if there had ever been a bean stalk as tall as the Tomtit had said or a frost as fierce, but surely his bride was too old for him if she had seen them for her own self!





THE TWO HORSES

Once upon a time there lived a lord's horse and a peasant's horse, and the two of them were great friends. Whenever they met they would talk and never have their fill of talking. But one day the lord's horse came out with something that badly hurt his friend's feelings.

"Unlike me, you are a horse of common breed," said he. "I am always harnessed to a coach mounted

on springs, and you, to a wagon or else a harrow. I am fed on nothing but barley, and you, mostly on straw. Just you look at me! See how slender and beautiful are my legs and how spotless my hoofs! Yours are all caked with mud. My neck is as arched and graceful as a swang's and yours is stiff and thick. My skin shines like silk and yours drips with sweat. I have a white star on my forehead and you have none. Which of us is more handsome—you or me?"

"You, of course!" said the peasant's horse.

"There you are!" said the lord's horse, lifting his head proudly. "And when I run it's a pleasure to watch me. I move lightly and swiftly, drawing the coach after me as fast as the wind, and the earth itself seems to run from under my feet. You could never do it."

"No, of course not!" said the peasant's horse. "I'm not up to it."

"You certainly are not!" said the lords' horse. "It's no use talking about it even. You couldn't outrun a snail, now, could you?"

"No, not a snail," said the peasant's horse. "Now, you are a different matter. I could outrun you easily."

This made the lord's horse very angry indeed. He began stamping his feet and snorting and shaking his mane.

"Very well," said he. "We'll see who outruns who!" And then and there it was agreed that they would run a race, circling the meadow and not stopping till one of them admitted that he could run no more.

The lord's horse threw back his head and started off at a gallop. He outdistanced the peasant's horse by a whole lap, and, catching up with him on the

second lap, left him behind again. He gave a whinny of delight and called:

"Isn't it time for you to rest, my friend? You might get tired."

"I won't, never fear," the peasant's horse replied.

On the third lap the lord's horse again caught up with the peasant's horse and again left him behind. He neighed in delight and called:

"Isn't it time for you to rest? You'll get tired."

"I won't, never you fear," the peasant's horse replied.

On the fourth lap, too, the lord's horse got ahead of the peasant's horse but he neighed less loudly now, calling out with nothing like his former confidence:

"Isn't it ... time ... for you ... to rest ... a little? ... You'll get ... tired."

"I won't, never fear," the peasant's horse replied. "But you seem all out of breath."

"It's because I hurt my foot," the lord's horse lied, galloping on.

On the fifth lap he again got ahead of the peasant's horse, but this time he neither neighed nor called out.

"Why are you groaning, friend?" the peasant's horse asked him.

"I stumbled on a root," replied the lord's horse.

On the sixth and seventh laps the lord's horse could not get far ahead of the peasant's horse, and on the eighth the peasant's horse caught up with the lord's horse and then passed him.

"Why have you fallen behind, friend—tired?"

asked he.

"No, I paused in order to think," the lord's horse

replied. "I'm simply beset by thoughts."

On the ninth lap the lord's horse stopped running altogether. He dropped down on the ground and kicked out with his legs.

"What's the matter, don't you feel well?" the peas-

ant's horse asked him.

"No, it's just that a horse-fly is plaguing me. It's bitten me all over. I'll drive it off and then run on again, we have plenty of time."

"Yes, that we have," the peasant's horse replied

and ran on without stopping.

On the tenth lap the lord's horse got to his feet and hobbled off behind some bushes to nibble at the grass. He avoided looking at the peasant's horse.

"Is it dinner-time, then, Your Lordship?" the peas-

ant's horse called to him.

"It's supper-time," the lord's horse replied crossly. "Don't you see that the fog is rising? You'd better take a rest, too. We've plenty of time."

"I don't need a rest," said the peasant's horse. "I'm only just starting to warm up. I'll run another ten

laps and then another and after that we'll see."

And from that day on the lord's horse, so shamed had he been by the peasant's horse, never turned up his nose at anyone any more.





THE KIND WOODCUTTER

Once in times long past a woodcutter went to the forest to chop some wood. He came up to a birch-tree and waved his axe and the birch-tree spoke up in a human voice and said:

"Do not kill me, woodcutter! I am young and have

many children. What will they do without me?"

The woodcutter took pity on the birch-tree. He came up to an oak-tree and was about to chop it down 17 but the oak-tree saw the axe in his hands and said in pleading tones:

"Do not kill me, woodcutter! I'm not yet fully grown and my acorns aren't yet ripe. If they are destroyed now no grove will ever spring up around me."

The woodcutter took pity on the oak-tree. He came up to an ash-tree and wanted to chop it down but the ash-tree saw the axe in his hands and said in pleading tones:

"Do not kill me, woodcutter! Only yesterday did my bride and I plight our troth. What will become of her if I am chopped down?"

The woodcutter took pity on the ash-tree. He came up to a maple-tree and was about to chop it down, but the maple-tree spoke up in pleading tones and said:

"Do not kill me, woodcutter! For my children are small and have been taught no trade. They will perish without me."

The woodcutter took pity on the maple-tree. He came up to an alder-tree and wanted to cut it down, but the alder-tree saw the axe in his hands and said in pleading tones:

"Do not kill me, woodcutter! This is just the time when I feed the tiny wood bugs with my milk. What will become of them if I am chopped down?"

The woodcutter took pity on the alder-tree. He came up to an aspen-tree and wanted to chop it down, but the aspen-tree spoke up tearfully and said:

"Do not kill me, woodcutter! What was life given me for but for me to rustle my leaves in the wind and frighten the highwaymen at night! What is to become of good and honest folk if I am chopped down?" The woodcutter took pity on the aspen-tree. He came up to a bird-cherry tree and wanted to chop it down, but the bird-cherry tree saw the axe in his hands and said in pleading tones:

"Do not kill me, woodcutter! I am in full bloom now and the nightingales like to perch on my branches and sing their songs. If I am chopped down they will fly away and their songs will be heard no more."

The woodcutter took pity on the bird-cherry tree. He came up to a rowan-tree and wanted to chop it down, but the rowan-tree spoke up in pleading tones and said:

"Do not kill me, woodcutter! I have only just flowered out. Clusters of berries will soon grow up on me and the birds will feed on them in autumn and winter. What will become of them if I am chopped down?"

The woodcutter took pity on the rowan-tree.

"It's no use, I'll never be able to bring myself to cut down any of the leaf-bearing trees!" said he to himself. "I'd better try my luck with the conifers."

He came up to a spruce-tree and wanted to cut it down, but the spruce-tree saw the axe in his hands and said in pleading tones:

"Do not kill me, woodcutter! Wait till I grow to my full height, for then you will be able to make floor boards of me. Now, while I'm still growing, people can take joy the year round in the sight of my green branches."

The woodcutter took pity on the spruce-tree. He came up to a pine-tree and was about to chop it down, but the pine-tree saw the axe in his hands and burst into tears.

"Do not kill me, woodcutter!" it begged. "I am still young and strong and my green branches, like those of the spruce-tree, are a lovely sight, summer and winter. It will sadden people if I am chopped down."

The woodcutter took pity on the pine-tree. He came up to a juniper-tree and was about to cut it down, but the juniper-tree, too, spoke up in piteous tones and said:

"Do not kill me, woodcutter! Of all the trees in the forest I am the one to do the greatest good. I bring good fortune to all and relief to sufferers from a hundred ailments. What will become of the men and animals who come to me for help if I am chopped down?"

The woodcutter sat down on a hummock and began to think.

"It's really quite a marvel!" said he to himself. "I never suspected that trees could talk. Now I know that they can, for they have all begged me not to chop them down. What am I to do? My heart is not made of stone that I can withstand their pleas. I would gladly leave the forest empty-handed, but what will my wife say when I get home?"

The woodcutter lifted his head and whom should he see coming out of a thicket but a little old man with a long grey beard. He had on a shirt of birch bark and a coat of spruce bark and he came up to the woodcutter and asked:

"Why do you sit there looking so sad? Is it that you've met with some misfortune?"

"There's no reason for me to be gay," the woodcutter replied. "I came to the forest to chop some wood to bring home. But now I cannot do it, such are the marvels I have seen here. The forest is alive and every tree thinks and feels and can speak in a human voice. It breaks my heart when they plead with me. I don't care what happens, I cannot bring myself to chop them down."

The little old man looked at the woodcutter warmly

and said:

"Thank you for not having closed your ears to my children's pleas and shed their blood. I am indeed grateful and will repay you for your kindness. From now on you will know great good fortune and never want for firewood or timber or anything else. And that goes for your family, too. Only you must none of you be overgreedy if you don't want evil to come of good. Take this rod of gold and treasure it as you do the apple of your own eye!"

And the little old man gave the woodcutter a golden rod several inches long and no thicker than a knitting

needle.

"If you want to build a house or put up a barn or a cow-house," said he, "just come up to an ant-hill and wave the rod over it three times. Be careful not to touch the ant-hill or damage it but tell the ants to build whatever it is you want and it will be ready by morning. And if you are hungry, tell your cooking pot to cook you whatever it is you fancy and it will do it. If it's honey you want, wave the golden rod over a bee-hive, and honey-combs full of fragrant honey will appear on your table. If it is birch or maple syrup you long for, wave the rod over a birch or a maple, and you will have all you want of it. The alder will give you its milk and the juniper will make you strong and healthy. And you won't have to hunt or fish either,

for your cooking pot will cook you as much meat and fish as you ask for. You have only to tell them, and the spiders will spin you a length of silk or weave you a length of cloth. All this and more will you have in return for having spared my children. I am the father of the forest and I rule over all the trees and wild beasts in it."

And bidding the woodcutter goodbye, the little old man vanished.

Now, the woodcutter's wife was as ill-tempered and spiteful a woman as can be. Seeing her husband coming toward her empty-handed, she rushed out into the yard in a rage.

"Where is the firewood I sent you for?" cried she. "In the forest where I left it to grow," the woodcutter replied, not raising his voice.

This only made the wife angrier still.

"I've a good mind to take a bunch of birch twigs and give you a hiding with them, you loafer!" cried she.

But the woodcutter waved his rod without her seeing it and said under his breath:

"Let it be my wife and not me that gets the hiding!"

And no sooner were the words out of his mouth than his wife started running up and down the yard, gasping and crying:

"Oh! Oh! It hurts! Don't! Please don't!"

And she would cover now one, now another part of her body with her hands to shield herself from the dancing, stinging twigs.

At last, seeing that she had had enough, the woodcutter ordered the rod to stop. He now knew how much he had the forest father to thank for and was very pleased that he could bring his shrew of a wife to reason any time he wanted to.

That same day the woodcutter decided to try out his golden rod on some ants. He had only one ramshackle old barn to his name and needed a new one badly.

He went to the forest, and, finding an ant-hill, waved the rod three times over it and said:

"Build me a new barn, ants, to replace the old one!"

And in the morning he came out of his house, and lo!—there in the yard stood a brand-new barn.

From that day there was not a happier man than our woodcutter in the whole of the countryside. He did not have to worry about food, for whatever he fancied the cooking-pot cooked for him and served, too, and all that his wife and he had to do was eat it. Between them, they had not a care in the world: the spiders spun their cloth for them, the moles ploughed their fields, and the ants sowed the grain and reaped it when the time came. And when the wife had one of her fits of anger, the golden rod brought her to her senses, so that she was the one to suffer most from her own bad temper. Many a husband in our own day, I shouldn't wonder, who hears this tale will sigh and say: "Ah, if only I had a rod like that!"

The woodcutter lived to a ripe old age and never knew a day's unhappiness, for he never asked of the rod what it was unable to do. Before he died he left the rod to his children, telling them what the father of the forest had told him and cautioning them not to wish for the impossible. The children, who did as he had told them to, lived out their lives as happily as he.

In later years the golden rod passed into the hands of a man who was heedless and unreasonable, thought little of his parents' behest and annoyed the rod with his empty demands. However, as long as what he asked for did not go beyond the bounds of ordinary common sense, nothing very bad happened.

But one day this foolish man demanded that the sun come down to him and warm his back. The golden rod did all it could, but the sun, instead of coming down itself, which was impossible in any case, sent such fierce rays down that the man and his house and farm were burnt to a cinder and not a trace was left of them. The golden rod, too, melted in the flames or so it was thought, for who was there to say that it hadn't! Only the trees had been there to see, but the sun's scorching rays had so terrified them that they quite lost the use of their tongues and have remained speechless to this day.



THE KING OF THE MUSHROOMS

Once upon a time some men out hunting for mushrooms in the forest found one that was bigger than any they had ever seen before. They began pulling it out of the ground when lo! —a little old man sprang out from under it. No larger than a finger he was with a beard twice that size. The little old man rushed off but the men ran after him. They caught him and asked who he was.

Said the little old man:

"I am king of all the mushrooms growing in this forest."

The men did not know what to do. They thought and they thought and could think of nothing better than to make a gift of the little old man to the king. This they did and the king rewarded them generously and ordered the little old man to be locked up in the cellar. "I shall hold a big feast," said the king to himself, "and show my guests what funny little bearded old men live under the mushrooms in my forest. Meanwhile, he must stay under lock and key."

Now, the king had a young son. One day the boy was in the courtyard playing with a golden egg and he chanced to send it rolling through a window straight into the cellar. The little old man saw the egg and at

once snatched it up.

"Give me back my egg!" cried the boy.

But the little old man called back:

"I won't! Come and get it yourself."

"How can I do that? The door is locked," the boy said.

"That's nothing. The keys are in the palace. Go and fetch them."

The boy did as he was told, and, when he had brought the keys, unlocked the door and came down into the cellar. The little old man gave him the golden egg and himself whisked between the young prince's legs and out the door and vanished.

The prince who had not noticed anything now decided to take a good look at the little old man before locking him up again. He gazed round, and, finding the little old man gone, was badly frightened. Locking

the door quickly, he took the keys back to the palace and never breathed a word about what had happened to anyone.

The day of the feast arrived and many guests came from all parts of the kingdom. A big crowd gathered round the palace, for everyone had heard that the

king had a surprise in store for his guests.

The king now sent a servant of his to fetch the little old man. The servant returned empty-handed, but when he said that the little old man was not there, the king refused to believe him and himself climbed down into the cellar.

However, what is gone is gone, and though the king felt ashamed at having called together his guests for nothing, he could not conceal from them that the little old man had vanished. He told them that he had got out of the cellar through a mouse-hole, and this they all believed and were very sorry indeed not to have seen him.

Many years passed and the young prince grew to manhood. Once at dinner the talk turned on the little old man, and the prince confessed that he had sent his golden egg rolling into the cellar and that that was how the little old man had managed to escape.

The king was very angry. He would not listen to anyone, not even to the queen, and drove the prince out of the palace. But he let him take a general along for company, for he knew that it was easier for two people to roam the world together and feed themselves.

The prince and the general set off on their way, they walked and they walked and they reached a forest. It was very hot and the prince felt thirsty, but where were they to get water? They walked on a little further, and there before them was a deep well.

Said the general:

"I'll let you down into the well on a rope if you like, and, when you have drunk your fill, pull you out again."

The prince agreed and the general let him down into the well, but when he had drunk his fill, called down to him:

"I'll pull you out again on one condition—that from

now on you will be general and I will be prince."

What was the prince to do? If he refused, the general, knave that he was, would leave him in the well. There was nothing for it but to agree.

The general pulled out the prince and they went on

again.

They came to the king of a strange kingdom and asked him if he had any work for them. And all the time they kept to their compact, the general calling himself prince and the prince calling himself general.

The king took the sham prince into the palace with him and he made the real one his chief groom. The other grooms drove the horses to pasture into the forest and the chief groom went with them, for it was his job to watch over them.

The chief groom sat down on a rock and he sorrowed and grieved over his sad plight. All of a sudden there before him stood the selfsame little old man whom he had let out of the cellar all those many years ago.

"Why are you so sad?" asked the little old man Said the prince in reply:

"There is no reason for me to be gay. My father drove me out of the palace for having let you escape and now the general has taken my name and title. He calls himself prince and I am obliged to pasture horses."

"Don't you grieve, everything will turn out all right," the little old man said, trying to comfort him. "Come to my eldest daughter's palace today."

Now, this made the prince very curious.

"Who are you, then?" he asked.

Said the little old man:

"They call me the King of the Mushrooms, for I am chief among them."

And he led the prince to his eldest daughter's palace. It was a copper palace, everything in it being made of copper, and truly a place to fill one with wonder! So happy did the prince feel there that he did not notice how the hours passed.

"It is time for you to leave us," said the King of the Mushrooms, "but, as is our custom, we will give you a farewell present. Ho there! Bring in a copper horse!"

A copper horse was led in, and so spirited was he that it was all four people could do to hold him.

"Here is my present," said the King of the Mushrooms.

The prince was frightened.

"What will I do with him? Why, it is all the four of them can do to hold him!" said he.

But the King of the Mushrooms replied:

"Here are four bottles of my magic potion. Drink it down if you want to be strong!"

The prince drank the potion and at once felt so strong that he feared the copper horse no longer.

Then the King of the Mushrooms gave him a copper pipe and said:

"Take good care of this pipe. If you lose it you will lose your horse too. And now put on the copper armour that is lying under the saddle."

The prince put on the armour, sprang on the copper

horse's back and rode off at a gallop.

On the following day he went to the forest again to graze the horses. He looked, and there was the King of the Mushrooms before him.

"Come and pay my middle daughter a visit today," said he.

The prince sprang up on the copper horse's back and made off at a gallop for the middle daughter's palace. Now, the middle daughter's palace was a silver one and everything in it was of silver. Time passed quickly, and the King of the Mushrooms had a silver horse brought for the prince as a farewell present. Eight men held the horse and it was almost more than they could do, so how could one man hope to cope with him?

The King of the Mushrooms told the prince to drink eight bottles of his magic potion. This the prince did and then he took the silver armour from under the saddle. He put it on and all of him sparkled and shone. And now the King of the Mushrooms brought out a silver pipe from his pocket.

"Take good care of it or you'll lose your horse,"

said he.

On the third day the prince went to visit the youngest daughter of the King of the Mushrooms who lived in a palace of gold. There the King of the Mushrooms gave him a golden horse for a present and

it was all twelve men could do to hold him. The prince had to drink twelve bottles of the magic potion before he grew strong enough to cope with the horse. The King of the Mushrooms gave him a golden pipe for a present, saying to his daughter:

"You too must give our guest a keepsake."

The youngest daughter brought a golden egg and gave it to the prince who thanked her, got on his

golden horse and galloped away.

He came back to his grooms and on the following day went to see the king in whose service he was. He looked, and there out of the palace came the king's youngest daughter weeping loudly.

"What has happened? Why are you crying?" the

prince asked.

And the princess replied:

"How can I help it! Tomorrow a terrible dragon is going to crawl out of the sea and eat me up. If they don't give me to him he will destroy the whole

kingdom."

The prince took pity on the princess. On the following day, when the king's soldiers had lined up by the side of the sea and the princess arrived and stood waiting for the dragon, he went to the forest and blew on his copper pipe. At once the copper horse appeared before him, and the prince put on his copper armour, sprang on the horse's back and made off at a gallop for the sea.

The dragon crawled out of the sea on his four paws

and asked of the people gathered on the shore:

"Is there anyone among you brave enough to fight me?"

No one replied, they all stood there in silence when

all at once the prince rode up to the dragon on his copper horse.

"Whom are you going to fight for?" asked the

dragon.

"For the princess and myself," the prince replied. "How are you going to fight—on horseback or on foot?" asked the dragon again.

"On horseback, I think," the prince said. "After all,

you have four legs, too, like my horse."

The dragon decided to use cunning. He ran off at first but then turned round very suddenly, thinking to

swallow the prince whole together with his horse.

But this was not to be! The prince caught up with the dragon, smote off his head with a single wave of his sword, threw his body in the sea and at once galloped off into the forest. But not a word did he say to his grooms, just as if nothing had happened.

On the following day the prince went to see the king again, and there, coming out of the palace, was

the king's youngest daughter, weeping loudly.

"What has happened?" asked the prince. "Why are you crying?"

And the princess replied:

"Tomorrow a six-headed dragon is going to crawl out of the sea and eat up my middle sister. How I wish I could find the brave man who saved me, for he would save my sister too!"

The prince returned to the forest, and on the following morning he blew on his silver pipe, and at once the silver horse appeared before him. The prince put on his silver armour, sprang on the horse's back and galloped away. He rode up to the sea and waited for the six-headed dragon.

All of a sudden the sea boiled up, and the sixheaded dragon crawled out of the water and called on the bravest among the men gathered there to fight him. All the soldiers ran off helter-skelter and only the prince on his silver horse made straight for the dragon.

"That's right, my son, come closer!" called the dragon. "It will be all the better for me, for I will eat

you both! "

And the dragon opened wide his jaws, thinking to swallow the prince together with his horse. But the prince's sword flashed, and all of the dragon's six heads rolled down on to the sand like ordinary cabbage heads.

The prince returned to the forest just as if nothing had happened, let his silver horse go and went off for

a sleep.

On the following day he went to see the king again and again met the princess in tears.

"What has happened?" asked the prince.

And the princess replied:

"Tomorrow a twelve-headed dragon is going to crawl out of the sea and eat up my eldest sister. How I wish I could find the brave man who saved me and

my middle sister! "

The prince took pity on the girl, and when morning came he blew on his golden pipe. The golden horse appeared before him, and the prince put on his golden armour, sprang on the horse's back and made off at a gallop for the sea.

The eldest princess was already on the shore waiting for the twelve-headed dragon, and even the king was there with his host, for he wanted to see how his

daughter would fare.

After a time there came the most fearful noise, the sea began to seethe and to boil, and the twelve-headed dragon thrust all his twelve heads out of the water and then crawled out all of him on to the shore. The soldiers ran off in fright, the king took to his heels and only the prince on his golden horse galloped boldly straight for the dragon. The dragon saw him and began to mock and to jeer at him.

"That's right, my son, come closer!" cried he. "It will be all the better for me, for I will eat up both you

and your horse! "

And, thinking to swallow the prince, the dragon opened wide his jaws. But the prince waved his sword and six of the dragon's heads rolled to the ground like cabbage heads. At this the dragon flew into a rage and began threshing the prince and his horse with his tail. Smoke poured from the dragon's mouth and steam from his nostrils and there seemed to be no way of getting at him. He was about to swallow the prince when the prince looked and saw the King of the Mushrooms standing before him by a large rock.

"Make haste and crack the golden egg!" called he to

the prince.

The prince took the golden egg out of his pocket and broke it in two, and at once a whole host of warriors poured out of it and threw themselves fear-

lessly at the dragon from all sides.

The dragon stood gaping at them, and the prince made good use of this and with one wave of his sword smote off his six remaining heads. The dragon fell lifeless to the ground, and the prince taking out the two halves of the golden egg, the whole host at once poured into it and hid there.

The dead dragon was left on the beach, and the prince galloped off into the forest and slept there for three days and three nights on end just as if nothing had happened. On the fourth day he felt someone shaking him, and when he opened his eyes, saw the King of the Mushrooms standing beside him.

"Get up quickly and go to the king," said the King of the Mushrooms. "That knave of a general of yours is there, demanding that the princess be given him in marriage. He says that it was he who killed the three

dragons."

The prince jumped up and blew on his copper pipe. The copper horse appeared, and the prince put on his copper armour and made off at a gallop for the palace. The general stood there boasting about how he had vanquished the three dragons when the prince came galloping up. The youngest daughter saw him and was so overjoyed that she cried to the king:

"Look, father, there is my true saviour!"

But the prince turned his copper horse round and rode off into the forest. There he blew on his silver pipe, got off the copper horse and on the silver one and rode back again to the king's palace.

The middle daughter saw him and cried: "Look, father, there is my true saviour!"

But the prince turned round his horse and rode off into the forest. There he blew on his golden pipe, and, getting off his silver horse and on the golden one, made for the king's palace. The eldest daughter saw him and cried:

"Look, father, there is my true saviour!"

The prince was about to ride back to the forest again, but the king stopped him and invited him into

the palace that he might reward him for having saved

his daughters.

"There is a prince from a far-off land here who says that he saved my daughters," said the king. "I don't know why they call you their true saviour."

Said the prince:

"The man who is passing himself off as a prince is only my general."

The king was much surprised.

"Then it is you who is the prince?" said he. "Well, then, you shall be richly rewarded for your valour. And you can take any one of my daughters in marriage besides. Just choose the one you like."

But the prince thanked the king, and, saying that there was nothing he needed, galloped off into the

forest without waiting for his reward.

And the king came back to his palace and drove out

the general.

The prince now made straight for the golden palace where lived the youngest daughter of the King of the Mushrooms, she who had given him the golden egg. They were married and lived together long and happily. But as for the King of the Mushrooms, from that day on no one laid eyes on him again.





THE MAGIC MIRROR

Unce upon a time, in years long past, there lived a king of great renown and very rich. He had more

money and gems than ten kings taken together.

Because he was so rich the king took it into his head that he would never grow old. But this was not to be: old age comes to all, rich or poor. The king was much put out about this. How could such a thing be? Was there no difference between him and the last beggar in his kingdom? He was as rich as ten kings taken together, but his hair was turning white and falling out just the same.

"That is not the way things should be," the king

decided and he summoned his sons to his side.

Now, he had three sons but he only summoned the two older ones, for his youngest son was a simple soul who was mocked at and called a fool by his brothers. But so good-natured was he that he never took offence at this.

The two sons came at his bidding, and the king said to them:

"When I was a child I heard that there was a magic mirror somewhere on earth in which one had only to look to turn young again. I will give half my kingdom to whichever of you brings me this mirror. Find it for me, and you will make me happy and yourselves, too. Prepare to set off at once and take with you whatever you need."

The sons were overjoyed and asked the king to give them a coach and six horses and a whole sack of gold besides.

The king gave them all they asked for, and the sons saddled the horses, put the sack of gold in the coach and called the coachman. Then they got into the coach and set off on their journey.

The youngest son learned of this and he came to his father and asked to be sent in search of the magic mirror, too.

Said the king, laughing:

"Where would a fool like you go? Your foolishness will be the end of you. Better go and take a walk, your brothers will do well enough without you."

But the fool was very hurt at being thought too young and foolish to join his brothers and would not be put off.

"Oh, very well!" the king finally agreed. "Let it be as you ask. Only don't think that I'll trust you with six horses and a sack of gold. Go as you are, and if you get into trouble blame yourself."

But the fool was very pleased, for it was enough

for him that he had been allowed to go.

He counted his money and found that he had only ten thalers, which meant that, however much he wanted to, he could not buy himself a good horse. In the end, all he could get was a very old and run-down grey nag.

The fool got on the nag's back and set off. The nag dragged painfully along, going into a jog-trot now and then, but this did not trouble the fool, for, thought he,

I am on my way, so what more do I need!

Toward evening he rode up to a large inn. A coach

and six stood at its door.

"This means my brothers are here!" said he to himself. "I'll go in and find them and perhaps they will take me with them."

He tethered his nag and came into the inn and when his brothers saw him they burst out laughing.

"Where are you off to?" asked they.

"I want to find the magic mirror," said the fool. "Take me with you and we'll be all the gayer for it."

"Go away, fool! If anything happens to you we'll be the ones to answer for it."

Now, this made the fool feel very bad indeed. He left the inn, got on the nag's back again and rode on.

And the two older brothers stayed in the inn and would go no further in search of the mirror.

"The wolves will eat up the fool together with his grey nag!" laughed they. "A fine mirror he'll get then."

On and on rode the fool and at last he came to a great leafy forest. He was about to ride round it when he saw a narrow little path leading into it. This he decided to follow, for, thought he, it is in a forest that one always finds things.

The whole day long he rode, and, feeling bored and lonely, broke a branch off a tree and cut out a little

pipe for himself.

He rode for a day, he rode for a second day, and on the third day he reached a small glade in which, beneath a mighty oak, stood a poor little hut.

Wanting to come into the hut, he decided to ride up closer, but before he could do so, a grey little old

woman came out on to the porch.

"Well, well! Someone to see me at last!" said she. "I saw the forest die and rot away and another grow up, so long have I been here, but not once in all this time did I see a living soul. What brings you here?"

"I am looking for a mirror, Grandma," the fool explained. "Not an ordinary one, mind, but a magic one, in which one has only to look to turn young again. And as my father does not want to grow old, he sent me in search of it. Do you know where I can find it, Grandma?"

"No, my son, I don't, this is the first I hear of such a mirror. But I have a sister who is even older than I am and she may know something about it. Why don't you go to see her? It will take you three days to get to her house."

The fool thanked her and rode on and in three days' time he reached the house of the old woman's older sister. And was she surprised to see him!

"What brings you here?" asked she.

The fool told her about the mirror and asked where it was to be found.

"That is something I can't tell you," said the old woman. "I heard about some such thing in my youth, but where it is I don't know. But perhaps my older sister knows. She is the wisest and the oldest of the three of us. Why don't you go to see her? It will take you three days to get to her house."

The fool thanked her and rode on and in three days' time he reached the house of the oldest of the old women. And she was more surprised to see him than

any of them!

"What brings you here?" asked she.

The fool told her about the mirror and asked where it was to be found.

"That is something I can't tell you," said the old woman. "I heard about some such thing in my youth, but where it is I don't know. But perhaps one of my servants knows. You'd better get off your horse and come into my house."

The fool came into the hut and it was so bright and

clean there that he was fairly dazzled.

The old woman took a long, carved whistle from a shelf and came out on to the porch with it. She blew hard once, and lo!—the whole forest came alive and rustled as if the grass were being trod by many, many feet. The fool looked out of the window and saw that all the beasts of the forest had gathered by the hut.

The old woman talked to them and came back to

her guest again.

"No, my forest servants know nothing about the mirror," said she. "I'll call my other servants—perhaps they have heard something about it."

And she took another carved whistle from the shelf, and, coming out on to the porch again, blew even

harder than before.

And again a rustling began in the forest—only it was not the grass that rustled this time but the branches, making a sound like the arms of many windmills whirling round and round. The fool looked out of the window and saw that all the birds of the air had flocked to the hut.

The old woman talked to them and came back to

her guest again.

"No," said she, "these servants of mine know no more than the first. But I have one other servant, the wisest of them all. If he has not heard of the mirror, then that means that no such thing exists."

The old woman took a third carved whistle from the

shelf and led the way to the porch.

"You can hear for yourself what the wisest of my servants has to say," said she. And she blew so hard that the fool's ears felt stopped up.

And now there came a rumbling sound and so loud was it that it seemed as if a storm were passing over

the forest.

A large two-headed hawk came down on to the glade, and, perching on a stone, asked with a wave of his wings:

"What is it the Mother of the Forest wishes?"

"I wish to know where the magic mirror is to be found," said the old woman.

"I can tell you where," the hawk replied, "but it won't do you any good, for no man can ever hope to reach it. It is hidden in the chamber of a princess who lives on an island in the middle of the sea, and so high are the rocks that surround the island that no ship can put in to shore."

"What a man cannot do, you can," said the old woman. "Put this guest of mine on your back and

carry him to the island! "

The hawk spread out his wings, the fool got on his back and up they soared to the sky.

For nine days and nine nights they flew and at last they reached the island in the middle of the sea.

Said the hawk:

"When night comes you will go into the castle and steal the mirror from the princess. But mind you don't stay there too long or it'll be the end of us. The princess keeps the mirror at the head of her bed. Don't be afraid of waking her. She sleeps so soundly at midnight that she would not awake even if you were to ride into her bed-chamber on horseback. Just seize the mirror and run!"

The hawk plucked out two feathers from his tail with his beak and said to the fool again: "When you reach the gate you will see two bears. Throw each of them a feather and you'll be able to pass by."

The fool took the feathers and went to the castle. The bears saw him and at once reared up on their hind paws. But the fool quickly threw them the feathers and the bears snatched them up and fell asleep.

The fool now came into the castle, and though everyone in it seemed to be sleeping, it was as light there as on the sunniest day and it did not take him long to find the princess. He took the magic mirror from under the pillow, thrust it in his bosom and was about to slip out when he saw a table set with food and drink.

"There's time enough to run away," thought he.

"I'll eat first."

And he set to and began to eat with great gusto. Said he to himself when he had gorged himself and could eat and drink no more:

"I wonder what the princess is like. I think I'd

better take a look! "

He came up to the bed and so lovely was the princess that he could not get his fill gazing at her! And on her finger there shone, bright as the sun, a most beautiful ring! The fool could not stop himself but took it off very gently and, this done, made off at a run for the gate.

The hawk was so angry at his long absence that he seized him by his *caftan* with his beak and soared up into the air. The bears were awake and they started up and rushed, growling, at the hawk but he was high overhead by then and out of their reach.

They flew over the sea and the hawk dropped down, dipped the fool in the water to his knees and

rose up again.

A little farther on he dropped down a second time and dipped the fool in the water to his chest, and then, again, to his neck. The fool was terribly frightened and yelled and screamed in a frenzied voice every time. After a while he came to a little and asked of the hawk:

"What did you dip me in the sea like that for? Why, my heart was in my shoes I was so frightened. That is

no way to joke."

"Let it be a lesson to you," said the hawk. "Now you'll know what it was I went through waiting at the gate while you dawdled in the castle. You were frightened when I dipped you in the water to your knees. Well, so had I been when you were looking over the princess's bed-chamber and the bears lifted their heads. You were frightened when I dipped you in the water to your chest. Well, so had I been when you started eating and the bears sat up. You were frightened when I dipped you in the water to your neck. Well, so had I been badly so when you began to take off the ring from the princess's finger and the bears reared up on their hind legs. Why, had the princess wakened, they'd have torn me to pieces and don't think you'd have escaped alive, either!"

"Thank God she did not wake!" the fool thought. They flew to the house of the oldest of the old women and showed her the mirror, and the old

woman said:

"I have no use for it, I am much too old for it to do me any good. But you may have need of these."

And she gave the fool three switches.

"Just wave these switches," said she, "and your

every wish will come true."

The fool thanked her, got on the back of his old nag again and rode off. He came to the house of the second old woman and showed her the mirror. "I have no use for it, I am much too old for it to do me any good," said the old woman. "But you may have need of this."

And she gave the fool a little bag.

"If you have nothing to eat, undo this bag," said she, "and loaves of bread will come spilling out of it."

The fool thanked her, said goodbye and rode on again.

He came to the house of the youngest of the old

women and showed her the mirror, and she said:

"I have no use for it, I am much too old for it to do me any good! But you may have need of these."

And she gave him a pair of scissors.

"If your clothes wear out," said she, "just click these scissors."

The fool thanked her, said goodbye and rode on.

He rode up to the selfsame inn and saw that the coach and six stood by it just as before.

"I'll go in and find my brothers," said the fool to

himself and he came into the inn.

His brothers saw him and said:

"Well, have you found the mirror?"

"So I have!" the fool replied.

The brothers then began to ply him with food and drink, and, when he was quite drunk, said:

"Come, fool, show us the mirror! What if it isn't a

magic mirror after all?"

"Oh, yes it is!" said the fool and he brought out the mirror. The brothers looked in it and saw that it was indeed a magic mirror.

"A treasure if there ever was one!" said they. "You don't need it, we'll take it for ourselves."

And, taking the mirror, they went off with it.

"Now haven't we been lucky!" said they. "But don't try to give us away, fool, or we'll give you a drubbing you won't forget."

They came to their father and gave him the mirror and the moment he looked in it he turned young

again.

"What fine clever fellows you are!" said he. "Here, take half my kingdom, for that is what I promised you."

Now the fool came running and he wept and

sobbed.

"It was I who found the mirror," said he. "My older brothers took it away from me! They stayed in the inn and never went anywhere at all."

"What a fool you are!" said his father.

"A fool like that should not be allowed to live!" said the older brothers. "Have him put to death!"

The fool tried to explain how he had found the mirror and how he had flown on the hawk's back, but this only made the king angrier than ever.

"Take him to the seashore," said he to his older sons, "put him in a boat with no oars in it and push the boat into the sea."

The brothers seized the fool, put him in a boat with no oars in it and pushed it into the sea.

"The hawk will help you!" cried they, laughing.

The wind sent the fool's boat out into the open sea and the waves tossed it about for a long time till at last they flung it on to some rocks. The fool looked to all sides of him and saw that he was on an island in the middle of the sea.

"My end has come," thought he. "To find myself on a desert island, of all places! I'd better try to drag the boat on to the shore at least."

He tried dragging the boat but found that this was more than he could do, for something that lay in his

bosom was hindering him.

He thrust his hand in his shirt, and lo! —found the three switches that the oldest of the old women had given him.

"I forgot all about the old women's gifts!" thought

he. "Now we'll see if they are truly magic gifts."

He took the switches, waved them once and said:

"Let a town grow up here and let there be many,

many people in it! "

And no sooner were the words out of his mouth than a town rose up from out of the ground and, as if out of thin air, many, many people appeared, naked as the day they were born, the poor things!

The fool took out the scissors, clicked them once

and then again and said:

"Come, now, scissors, dress the townsfolk!"

And at once many carts loaded with clothing drove up. All the townsfolk had to do was to come up and dress themselves!

But this was not the end of it, for there was nothing for them to eat.

The fool got out his bag and untied it and at once loaves of bread came spilling out of it, one after another, enough for ten kingdoms!

The fool became king on the island and all the islanders were well pleased with him, which was only natural, for thanks to the switches, the scissors and the bag they never lacked for anything.

One fine day the young king was out taking a stroll on the sea-shore when he saw a ship far out at sea.

"Quick, now, where is my boat?" asked he.

A boat was brought him and he got into it and rowed up to the ship.

No sooner was he near her than he saw a princess on board, the very same one from whom he had stolen the magic mirror.

The king greeted the princess and invited her to

visit his kingdom.

"Thank you, but I can't come with you," said the princess. "I must sail on. My magic mirror has been stolen from me, you see, and so has my golden ring. And whoever has my ring is the one I must marry. And what if he turns out to be an old man in his dotage or a wicked magician or some such monster? With my magic mirror to help him he'll live another hundred years and never rest till he finds me. But he won't think to look for me at sea, so that's why I have decided to live out the rest of my life sailing the seas."

At this the king took her ring off his finger and gave it to the princess, and the princess was overjoyed, for wasn't her husband-to-be young, handsome, and a king besides!

They stepped out on to the shore, and all who saw

them greeted them joyously.

Soon afterwards the king and the princess were married and their wedding was celebrated in grand style, the townsfolk feasting and making merry for many a month on end.

As for the magic mirror, it was lost and has not

been found to this day.



SMUDGEFACE

There was once a man who had three sons, two of them clever young men and the third, a fool. The father made much of his two elder sons but gave not a pin for his youngest one. The elder brothers, too, mocked at the fool and called him Smudgeface if they called him anything.

So unbearable was life for him at home that poor Smudgeface made up his mind to seek his fortune elsewhere. He thought and he thought where to go and at last decided, in the hope of finding some work there, to make for the town where lived the king himself.

On the way, Smudgeface heard that in the king's forest there lived two fierce beasts, an aurochs and a boar, who attacked all and sundry and that this troubled the king so much that he had had the bravest of his men go into the forest time and again to try and kill them. But since none had been able to do so, the king had promised that he would give his daughter in marriage to whoever did away with the fearful beasts. The bravest of the brave and the strongest of the strong had set out at once to try their luck but had only gotten out of the forest alive by the skin of their teeth, and the king did not know what to do.

"Why shouldn't I go after those beasts!" said Smudgeface to himself. "I might get the better of

them."

And he came to the palace and declared that he

would do away with the aurochs and the boar.

"Just look at him!" the king's servants said. "Why, we had the likeliest and bravest of young men here and none of them could do anything, so what can this fool do! He'll only make a laughing-stock of himself, and serve him right, too!"

They would have liked to drive Smudgeface out of the palace then and there but dared not, for the king had said that anyone who wished to could try his luck

and none were to be kept from doing so.

Smudgeface now announced that he would fight the aurochs first, and the whole town, including the king himself, came running to watch the combat.

Choosing a place near the church where grew age-old oak-trees, Smudgeface leaned against one of them and waited.

After a time out sprang the aurochs from the forest and came at him with a roar, but Smudgeface pretended not to see him, and it was only when he was very close and about to pin him to the oak that he leapt aside. The aurochs lunged at him but missed, his sharp horns piercing the trunk of the tree and sticking in it so that toss and shake his head as he would he could not pull them out again. Smudgeface now rushed at the aurochs and with one wave of his sword cut off his head.

Seeing the beast dead, the townsfolk waved and cheered and the king himself clapped his hands for joy.

But even this was not enough for the king's servants.

"The aurochs is nothing!" cried they. "Let the fool try and do away with the boar. The boar won't stick his tusks in a tree, you may be sure!"

"We'll see about that!" said Smudgeface.

He came into the church, and, locking all the doors save one, stood there and waited.

The boar now came running, and in his haste he did not notice Smudgeface at all at first. All round the church he ran, and only then, seeing him standing in the door, made a rush at him. But Smudgeface leapt aside, and the boar tore past him and into the church. Without a moment's thought, Smudgeface slammed the door shut behind him, and the boar was trapped inside.

The townsfolk were filled with wonder to see how

clever Smudgeface was, and even the king himself was full of praise for him.

"Now there's a clever lad!" said he. "He's managed to trap the boar. Let's see if he can do away with him."

But Smudgeface only laughed to hear such talk. He called to the boar from behind the door and teased him, and the boar roared and flung about the church in a rage, trying to find a way out.

All of a sudden there he was standing on the belfry and looking down on the people below. For Smudgeface had left the door to the belfry ajar on purpose, to lure the boar there. He began teasing him now harder than ever, and the boar could bear it no longer but made a lunge at him, and, missing his footing, fell from the belfry. Smudgeface leapt aside just in time, and the boar hit the soft earth below. He plunged into it to his belly and could not so much as stir, and Smudgeface brought out his sword and cut off his head.

The people rejoiced to see the fearful beast dead, and the king clapped his hands in delight.

Said Smudgeface, coming up to him:

"Well, will you let me have your daughter in marriage?"

"I suppose I must, for a promise is a promise," replied the king.

So Smudgeface and the king's daughter were married, and a right fine wedding was theirs. So hard did everyone dance that the floor boards bent, the earth rocked and shook and the stars blinked in the sky. A hundred bulls and a thousand hogs were roasted for the guests, and the tables were set out in the palace

courtyard that all might eat and drink at the king's expense. Only after the new moon appeared in the sky for a second time did the guests begin to take their leave.

Smudgeface settled down in the palace and was happy as could be. His young wife was so comely and sweet that a better one could not be found and the servants attended to his every need just as if he were the king himself.

But the king did not like his sons-in-law to twiddle their thumbs and fritter away their time, so he said to Smudgeface:

"There is a white bird, a magic one, living in my forest. I want it to be caught. Go with my other sons-in-law and hunt for it."

Said Smudgeface with a yawn:

"Oh, all right, I'll go if you say so!"

The other sons-in-law rose with the first gleam of dawn and went off to the forest to hunt for the bird but Smudgeface slept on as though he had not a care in the world. It was midday when his wife woke him, saying:

"Come, now, are you ever going to get up? The husbands of my sisters have been in the forest for a long time now, they may even have caught the bird while you lie here and sleep."

"What is to be will be," said Smudgeface in reply, yawning.

But he got up all the same, ate, and, taking some food along with him, went to the forest. He walked about in it for a long time but no bird did he see. After a time he met a grey-haired old man there who said to him:

"Give me something to eat, my lad. I haven't had a crumb in my mouth for three days."

Now, Smudgeface was never one to be stingy, so he gave his bag of food to the old man and said:

"Here, Grandpa, eat your fill. And don't be cross that I have nothing better to offer you."

The old man took the bag and began polishing off the food with great gusto.

Said he between bites:

"Were you setting out for a distant spot, then, that you took some food with you?"

Said Smudgeface in reply:

"I am here to try and catch the white bird, for so the king ordered his sons-in-law to do. But since the others set out before dawn and have surely caught it by now, I am simply wasting my time."

Said the old man:

"Do not grieve, for no one can catch this bird without my help. Gather the bread crumbs from the ground and scatter them in the glade yonder. Many different birds will come flying to peck them, the one the king wants among them. You won't have much trouble catching it, so never you fear. All you have to do is pounce on it and seize it. And if ever you need my help again, come here and call three times 'I am here, Grandpa!' and I'll hear you and come."

Smudgeface thanked the old man for his counsel and did just as he had told him. He caught the white bird, and, coming out on to the road along which the king's other sons-in-law were to return home, sat down to wait.

He waited a long time, even finishing what was left of the food, and still they did not come. It was evening when at last they appeared, coming out of the forest with hanging heads.

Seeing Smudgeface sitting there, they were very

angry and began to chide and to scold him.

"Just look at that loafer!" cried they. "Dozing by the wayside while we do all the work. We're all in a sweat what with running about so much!"

Said Smudgeface in reply:

"I am not such a fool as to rush about the forest in vain. Why shouldn't I sit and sleep for a bit now that I've caught the bird!"

"Stop talking nonsense," the sons-in-law burst out.

"If you don't believe me, look for yourselves!"

And with these words Smudgeface untied his bag and showed them the bird.

"Who would have thought it!" said they, amazed,

and the oldest of them asked:

"What are you going to do with the bird now that you have it? Perhaps you'll sell it to us? We'll pay you well for it."

"I will if you do."

"How much do you want for it?"

"A piece of your little finger no bigger than an oat grain."

The oldest of the sons-in-law thought this over.

"Of course, chopping off a piece of my finger will hurt," said he to himself, "but still, I think I'll let the fool have it. For then I'll at least get the bird and the king will give me a good sum of money for it."

He chopped off a piece of his little finger and handed it to Smudgeface, and Smudgeface slipped it in his pocket and gave him the bird. And the oldest of the sons-in-law took the bird to the king and got a

large sum of money from him in reward.

On the following day the king summoned his sons-

in-law again.

"I am pleased that you've managed to catch the white bird," said he. "But only him will I think truly brave and reward royally who catches and brings me the magic horse. Many have tried to do it but none succeeded. Go to the forest now and catch it!"

On the next day, the sons-in-law rose with the first gleam of dawn and set out for the forest, and only Smudgeface snored on as if whether the horse were caught or not mattered to him not at all.

It was his wife who woke him, saying:

"Get up and go to the forest! Go now, and perhaps you'll catch the horse. The others caught the bird yesterday while you returned empty-handed."

Off went Smudgeface to the forest, nor did he

forget to take along a bag of food.

He came to the place where he had met the old man and called out three times:

"I am here, Grandpa!"

And no sooner were the words out of his mouth than there stood the old man before him.

"Are you here to try and catch something again?"

asked he.

Said Smudgeface in reply:

"The king has ordered the magic horse to be

caught. Do please help me! "

"That's easy! Here is a bridle for you. Go to the edge of the forest, and when some horses come to graze there, put it on the one that comes last. It will be the one the king wants."

countless treasures that he had carried off these seven hundred years ago.

"If we find them and you succeed in breaking the magic spell cast over them, then you will be both happy and rich," said he in conclusion.

The two had a good supper brought them by the

magic knapsack and then lay down for a sleep.

On the following morning they set off for the forest to see how the captured sorcerer was faring. They found him all rolled up into a ball like a hedgehog, and his arms and legs having been bound and a stick passed under his knees, unable so much as to stir.

"Out of the knapsack, cudgel!" ordered the good

magician.

And the cudgel flew at the wicked sorcerer and began pummelling him so hard as if it had set out to mash every bone in his body. The sorcerer wept and cried and begged for mercy and said that he would tell them whatever they wanted to know. But when his captor demanded that he bring back the three princesses and all their countless treasures, he told them that so much time had passed since he had carried them off that he no longer remembered where he had hidden them. At this the cudgel was ordered out of the knapsack again, and the sorcerer, seeing that unless he spoke out he was done for, finally told them all.

Said the good magician:

"I am going to keep you captive until we have found the princesses and all their countless treasures. But I cannot leave you here, for someone may see you, and, not knowing who you are, free you out of pity." With these words he seized the sorcerer, heaved him up on to his back like a bale of tow, carried him to a deep ravine and threw him down into it so that his bones rattled.

"Wait there until we come back!" cried he with a

laugh.

He then told the youth that the place the wicked sorcerer had told them about lay a great distance away so that they could only get there by means of magic. At a word from him the knapsack turned into a trough, just big enough to hold two people, with wings nearly twelve feet long on either side of it.

No sooner had the two friends climbed in and seated themselves than the trough rose into the air, and, soaring to the clouds, flew south. It sped them tirelessly onward day and night, and they never ran out of food or drink on the way, for it supplied both as promptly as had the knapsack.

For over a week they flew, and at last the good

magician ordered the trough to descend.

They came down in a vast sun-parched desert with ruins dotting the sands here and there, and the good magician turned the trough back into a knapsack again, and, hanging it on his friend's back, said:

"You have a two-day journey ahead to a place

where I cannot accompany you."

He began shovelling away the sand at the foot of one of the ruins and soon uncovered a secret trapdoor. Lifting the top, they saw a stairway leading downward. The good magician caught a large fly, put it in a box and told the youth to hide it in his bosom.

"If you are asked to tell one princess from another, let the fly out of the box and watch carefully to see on which of them it lights," said he. "She will be the one you want."

"Let come what may! " said the youth to himself,

and he set boldly off on his way.

On and on he went down the dark stairway, and at last, when a few hours had passed and he began to feel tired and hungry, sat down on a step. He had some food and water and after resting for an hour or two went on again. His eyes soon caught a faint gleam of light ahead, and a half hour later he came out on to a large glade where stood a beautiful palace.

The youth made for the palace and was met at the door by a little old man with a long grey beard who

said to him:

"Come in, my lad, and try your luck. If you succeed in guessing which of the three princesses is the youngest, then you will only need to take her by the hand, and all who are asleep will come awake again. If you don't, then you, too, will fall asleep and never wake any more."

The youth drew out from his bosom the little box with the fly in it and followed the old man. Passing through two rooms, they came into a third where stood three silken beds in which three pretty maids lay fast asleep, and so much alike were they that none could have said which of the three was the youngest.

The youth looked at the maids for a long time, but at last, seeing that he could never tell them apart, let out the fly from its box. The fly spun round the room for a while and then lighted on the maid in the middle

bed. The youth at once came up to her, and, seizing her by the hand, cried:

"Here is the youngest sister!"

The same instant the princesses awoke and rose from their beds, and the youngest of the three threw her arms round her deliverer's neck and said:

"Thank you, brave youth! You have wakened us from a long sleep and broken the magic spell cast

over us. Let us hurry home now! "

They started back, but when they came to the place where the staircase had been, the youth saw that it was no longer there, and he and the three princesses had to grope their way through a dark underground passage. After a time they came out into the sunlight again, but-lo and behold! -where a sandy desert had spread were lush, flower-grown meadows and where had been ruins stood a magnificent palace with a large town beyond it.

The good magician came forward to meet them. He took the youth by the hand and led him aside to where, hidden behind some bushes, was a small lake

with the purest, clearest water ever seen!

"Look at your reflection in the water!" said the magician.

The youth looked and could not believe his eyes: his face had not changed, but he was clothed as richly as a king in garments of silk, velvet and gold.

"Whom have I to thank for all this?" asked he.

Said the good magician:

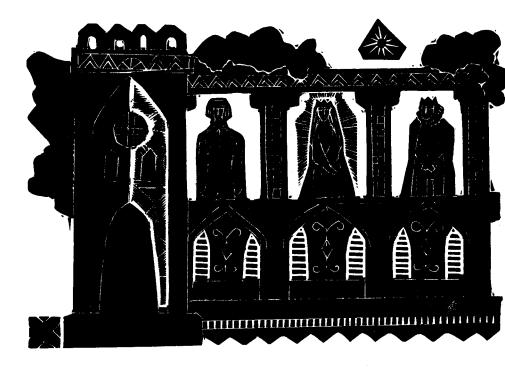
"That is the knapsack's last service to you. From now on you won't need either its help or mine, for you are going to marry the princess and, when the old 8 king dies, become king yourself. I hope that I have now repaid the debt I owed you."

"A thousand times over!" exclaimed the youth joy-

fully.

As the good magician said so it was, for only a few days later the youth and the princess were married, and in a year, when the old king closed his eyes forever, his son-in-law became king in his stead.





THE FLEETFOOTED PRINCESS

In a certain kingdom there lived a princess, and so beautiful was she that her fame spread throughout the whole wide world. From all sides, from the south and the north, the east and the west, wooers came to plead for her hand, and at the gate of the royal palace horsemen of noble birth mounted on their best chargers appeared again and again. But matchmaking was not so easy a matter for them as it is in our day when 83 a suitor need fear nothing even if he spends the morning going round to seven different houses asking for the hands of seven different maids. The young men who wanted to marry the beautiful princess had to be very brave indeed. For the princess had feet that were as light and fleet as the wind and she vowed to her father that she would only marry a man who was her match in this and more, being able not only to overtake but to outdistance her. Now, this would not have been so bad had the princess not added another condition to this, and that was that any suitor she beat in a race be put to death at once.

Strange as it may seem, many youths of noble birth, though they knew that they were forfeiting their lives, took up the challenge. As a consequence, they had their heads chopped off and then stuck up on stakes in front of the king's palace where they were jeered at by all who saw them and struck terror in the hearts of would-be suitors.

Now, a sober-minded person will say that these heads must have been empty heads in the first place, since their luckless owners would hardly have let them go so easily otherwise. But to speak thus is to forget that it is hot blood that flows in a youth's veins and sometimes drives him to rash and imprudent actions.

However, in the long run the heads that crowned the stakes had their effect, for as time passed there were fewer and fewer wooers, and if one happened to come riding into the king's courtyard he did not tarry there but rode off again straightaway without trying his luck. As for the rare fool who did, he never saw his home again but left his head on the palace fence for ravens to peck clean.

The clatter of a horse's hoofs on the road had not been heard for some time and the people were beginning to hope that these vain attempts at matchmaking had come to an end, when a prince from a far-off land arrived in the palace. Now, this prince was a clever young man, for before setting out to ask for the princess's hand he had spent several years practicing running daily and had learned to run so fast that he could outrun the strongest and fastest runners in his kingdom.

Wanting, first, to boast of his wealth and, second, to give his feet a rest before the race, the prince set off on his journey in a coach, taking a sack of gold half a pood in weight with him and tying it to the back

of the coach just as if it were a sack of oats.

He had only put a few versts behind him when he saw out in the open field ahead a man who seemed to be flying toward him as if on wings. Several moments later the man had passed the coach, rushing past it like the wind.

"Stop! Stop!" the prince shouted as loud as he could. The man heard him and stopped. Driving up to him, the prince saw that he had a millstone tied to each of his feet, proving that he was an even better runner than he had thought at first.

"Why have you tied those millstones to your feet?"

asked he.

"So that my feet might touch the ground while I'm running," the man replied. "If it were not for that, I would be swept up to the skies."

"A man like that could be of great help to me," thought the prince. "Who knows how things may

turn out! If I see that I stand little chance of winning, perhaps I can send him to take part in the race in my stead."

"How would you like to take up service with me?"

asked he of the runner.

"I have nothing against it if we can come to terms. How much will you pay me?"

"I will give you as much to eat and to drink as you like, the finest of clothing to wear and a purse of gold every year besides," the prince replied.

They struck hands, and the prince told Fleetfoot to seat himself on the sack of gold at the back of the

coach.

"Why should I do that?" said Fleetfoot surprised. "I

can go faster than your horses, believe me."

They set off on their way, the prince in the coach and Fleetfoot on foot, and soon saw a man sitting by the wayside with a rifle in his hands. He seemed to be aiming at something, but what it was neither the prince nor Fleetfoot, hard as they looked, could see.

"What are you doing here?" asked the prince.

But the hunter made no reply and only waved his hand as if to tell him not to make any noise lest he frighten off the game.

"What are you doing?" the prince asked again, but as no reply followed, repeated the question a third

time.

"Be quiet," the hunter said in low tones.

He fired his gun and then rose and said:

"There, I've got him! Now I can answer your question. That was a mosquito I shot. He'd been spinning round the tower in the city of Babylon, trying to light on the tip of the steeple. I had to stop

him, for he weighed over five poods and might have broken it."

"Can you really see that far?" asked the prince in surprise.

"Do you call that far?" laughed Keeneye. "I can see much farther than that!"

"Wait!" Fleetfoot cried. "I'll run there and see if he's told us the truth."

And with these words he took off like a whirlwind and at once vanished from sight.

"A wonderful shot like that might be of great help to me, too," thought the prince.

"How would you like to take up service with me?"

asked he of Keeneye.

"I have nothing against it if we can come to terms,"

Keeneye replied. "How much will you pay me?"

"I will give you as much to eat and to drink as you like, the finest of clothing to wear, and a purse of gold every year besides," said the prince.

They struck hands, and just then Fleetfoot appeared, carrying the huge mosquito shot by Keeneye

on his back.

Keeneye now seated himself on the sack of gold at

the back of the coach, and they moved on.

They had only gone a short way when the prince, who had been looking about him carefully and letting nothing go unnoticed, saw a strange man lying by the wayside. He had his ear, which was huge and looked like nothing so much as a trumpet, to the ground and seemed to be listening to something.

"What are you doing here?" asked the prince.

"Five kings have come together in the city of Rome and are holding a conference on questions of war,"

the man replied. "I wanted to learn whether or not they were plotting to fight against us."

"Can you really hear what is being said such a great

distance away?" asked the prince in surprise.

"Do you call that far? So sharp is my ear that it can catch sounds coming from much farther away," Longear said. "In fact, had I been the least bit inclined to listen to so much empty prattle, I could have known of everything that is being talked about throughout the world."

The prince decided that this man, too, could be of

help to him.

"How would you like to take up service with me?" asked he.

"I have nothing against it if we can come to terms,"

Longear replied. "How much will you pay me?"

"I will give you as much to eat and to drink as you like, fine clothing to wear and a purse of gold every year besides," said the prince.

They struck hands and then moved on, Longear curling up his long trumpet-like ear that it might not brush against the ground and seating himself beside

Keeneye on the sack of gold.

They had not been on their way very long when a large forest loomed ahead of them. Even at a distance the prince could see the crown of now one, now another of the trees rising several inches above that of its neighbours and then sliding back again and out of sight. He asked his servants if they knew how this could come about but they were as puzzled as he. That a tree, when cut down, should vanish from sight as it fell was only natural, but that it should rise into the air before falling was not and there seemed to be

no explanation for it.

The travellers now reached the forest, and, riding into it, saw a man there uprooting trees. He would come up to one, clasp it with both hands and pluck it out of the ground together with the roots just as though it were a turnip or a head of cabbage.

The coach drew to a stop and the man stopped working and came up to it. Thinking the prince in his rich coach to be the owner of the forest and fearing that he would forbid him to fell the trees, he said very

humbly:

"Do not be angry, kind sir, that I felled several trees in your forest. I did not touch any of the really big ones. My old woman wanted to cook some porridge and she told me to bring her an armful of firewood. I was just about to take another log or two and go home when you drove up."

The prince, amazed at the man's vast strength, decided to pretend just for the fun of it that he really

was the owner of the forest.

"I have nothing against you felling my trees," said he. "You can take one of the thicker ones if you like."

The man was overjoyed, and, choosing a tree so thick that he could hardly clasp it with both hands, pulled it effortlessly out of the ground.

"How would you like to take up service with me?"

asked the prince.

"I have nothing against it if we can come to terms,"

the man replied. "How much will you pay me?"

"You will get all the food and drink you want, fine clothing to wear and a purse of gold every year besides," said the prince.

The man scratched the back of his head as if in hesitation and then said:

"Allow me to take the firewood home first and tell my old woman where I am going so as not to make her wait in vain. I'll be back in a jiffy."

The prince gave him leave to do so, and the man gathered up the uprooted trees in his arms and quickly went off home. He was soon back, and the prince was very pleased at having procured for himself the services of yet another man who could well be of help to him on occasion.

Leaving the forest behind them, the travellers rode across a broad plain. On and on they rode for a long time till at last they saw a city ahead with seven windmills lining the road that led to it. The prince, who was quick to notice things, saw that though the air was balmy and still and not a leaf stirred on a tree, the arms of the windmills were turning.

Riding ahead a little way he felt the wind blowing. It was a sudden gust, the kind that creeps in through a pipe or a crack in the wall and comes at you in a room. However, it died down almost at once, and the air was still again. The prince looked to all sides of him but could not understand where the wind might have come from. Riding up to the city gate, he noticed a man of no great height standing by the side of the road. He was leaning on a large stone with his right hand, and, his head thrown back a little, covering now one, now the other of his nostrils with his left one.

The prince stopped the horses.

"What are you doing here, my good fellow?" asked he.

"What is a poor man like me to do! I could find no better work, so I decided to blow at the city windmills on windless days like this one and make them turn. But it is a trifling job and one that brings in only enough to keep me from starving to death."

"Is this work as easy as all that for you?" the

prince asked.

"Yes indeed! You can see it is for yourself," the man replied. "I keep my mouth closed and one of my nostrils stopped up lest I raise a wind so strong that it will smash the windmills to bits."

"How would you like to take up service with me?"

asked the prince.

"I have nothing against it if we can come to terms and you pay me enough to keep me from starving ever again," the man replied.

"You will get what my other servants get," said the prince. "As much food and drink as you like, fine clothing to wear and a purse of gold a year besides."

"That will suit me nicely, thank you, until something better turns up," said Windmaker, pleased. "It's a bargain, then! Catch a bull by the horns, take a man at his word, as the saying goes."

Windmaker joined them, and the prince now made with all his five servants for the king's city to seek his fortune, never knowing what awaited him there—whether he would marry the beautiful princess or lose his head on the block.

They rode into the city and stopped at the best inn, and the prince ordered the inn-keeper to provide his servants with everything they wanted in the way of food and drink.

"Take this for the time being," said he, throwing a handful of gold coins on the table. "I will pay you generously before leaving."

Then he ordered the city's best tailors and bootmakers to be called in that they might make suitable clothing for his servants who, though each was very skilled at his own trade, were dressed like beggars and lived up to the saying "has nine trades to his name and hunger for a tenth". Rumour of the new wooer's wealth soon reached the old king, but the prince only came to see him on the third day after his arrival when his servants' new clothes and shoes were ready.

Seeing the young and handsome prince, the old king

said to him with a father's kindness:

"Forget this whole silly business, my dear young friend. You may be the greatest of runners, but you will never outrun my daughter who has feet like wings. I am truly sorry for you and do not want you to lose your life in vain."

"You are very kind, Your Majesty," the prince said. "However, I am told that he who does not wish to take part in a race with the princess himself can

send his servant to do so in his stead."

"That is so," the king replied. "But what good would it do you? If your servant loses the race, as he is bound to, you will be the one to pay for it: your head, not his, will be chopped off and stuck up on a stake."

The prince thought this over and then said firmly: "This is what I have decided. Let one of my servants try his luck instead of me, and if he is beaten I will pay with my life for it. I came to your city to take part in the race and I would far rather lose my

life than refuse to do so and become the laughingstock of all. Let them jeer at me, dead, rather than living."

The old king went on for a long time trying to persuade the prince to give up his risky venture, but as the prince would not, there was nothing for it and the race was set for the next day.

After the prince left him the king decided to have a

talk with his daughter and had her called in.

Longear, who was at the inn at the time but could hear everything that was said at the palace, stopped

still at the king's first words.

"My dear child," said the king to his daughter, "you have caused the death of many young men and saddened me deeply thereby. But not one of your wooers did I like as much as I like the young prince who is to compete with you tomorrow. He is as handsome as he is clever. I beg of you, for the sake of the love you bear me, to run less quickly than usual and allow him or his servant to win. Then I will at last have a son-in-law and one worthy of inheriting the throne at my death."

"What's that?" the princess cried out angrily, her cheeks flaming. "Do you think that I would do such a thing for the sake of some young pup and all in order to get married? Never! Better that I should remain an old maid to the end of my days. Who asked him to come here, in the first place? I didn't! He came himself, unasked, like those others. Well, we have enough trees in our forest to make stakes for his and for other such empty heads. Once they are put up on those stakes the wind will blow all these crazy notions out of them. If you feel sorry for the prince, then send

him off home, but don't expect me to show him any mercy. He who doesn't listen to kind advice has no one but himself to blame! "

The king, knowing how obstinate and ill-tempered his daughter was, argued no more, and Longear hastened to tell the prince what he had overheard. He had only just done so when Electfoot are seen in

had only just done so when Fleetfoot came in.

"I don't want to be seen with these millstones tied to my feet," said he. "It will embarrass me. Order six bullock hides to be bought and have a sack made out of them and filled with iron weighing as much as the two millstones. Then I won't feel ashamed, for everyone will take me for a travelling apprentice."

The prince did as Fleetfoot asked. The bullock hides and the iron were purchased and brought in and

on the following morning the sack was ready.

Heaving it on to his back, Fleetfoot made for the place where the race was to be run. The sack was in his way and bothered him at first but he soon got used to it.

The townsfolk flocked to the race. Many laughed at Fleetfoot for burdening himself with the sack, others said:

"A wise man removes any extra clothes he has on before running a race, but this one does not even have the sense to take down his sack."

Longear passed on to the prince and Fleetfoot what they were saying but Fleetfoot remained unperturbed.

The race was to be run on a road seven versts long, on either side of which trees had been planted to shield runners from the hot sun. There was a small spring at the end of the road, and, according to the rules, each participant was given an empty bottle

which he had to fill with water from the spring before starting back, on the second leg of the race.

At a signal, the princess and Fleetfoot took off together. But only a few minutes later, Fleetfoot, the sack round his shoulders, had swept as fast as the wind past the princess, reached the spring, and, filling the bottle, started back. He was halfway to the finish when he met the princess who was still on her way to the spring.

"Do stop for a moment, my good fellow!" begged she. "I have hurt my foot. Give me a little water from your bottle for me to bathe it with, and then we can run on."

"Very well," Fleetfoot said, not suspecting that the princess was trying to trick him. "I am in no hurry. I can sit here if you like and wait for you while you run to the spring, and then we can run back together."

He sat down on the ground, and the princess quickly thrust a sleeping powder under his nose which at once put him to sleep. She then snatched up his bottle and started at a run for the finish.

Keeneye, who had been watching the race and seen what happened, picked up his rifle. He fired at the tree under which Fleetfoot lay sleeping and knocked down a twig which fell on Fleetfoot's nose and woke him.

Seeing the princess's empty bottle beside him and the princess herself running away from him in the distance, Fleetfoot was alarmed. He rushed to the spring, filled the bottle, and, rushing back again as fast as a whirlwind, passed the princess and came in first.

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The prince was proclaimed winner, and the princess returned home in a temper. She could not reconcile herself to the thought that another could run better than she.

The prince and his helpmeets came back to the inn where he had a rich feast served them and then generously rewarded Fleetfoot and also Keeneye for having wakened him in time.

Great as was the noise of the feast, it did not keep Longear from overhearing what the king and his

daughter were saying to each other in the palace.

"My dear child," began the king, "you must make up your mind to marry the prince, you really must. There is nothing to be done, a pair of feet that is faster than yours has at last been found! And I am very glad of it, since it means that, first, no more young men will lose their lives because of you, and, second, that I will have a son-in-law after my own heart."

The king wanted to go on but could not, for his daughter's tongue, numbed by fury, now loosened, and the words began to tumble out of her mouth like water from a spring. She announced that if her father tried to force her to marry she would take her own life and that no power on earth could compel her to become the wife of a man who owed his victory over her to the prowess of his servant.

Finally, seeing that her outburst had tired her and that she was beginning to run out of words, the king again spoke up. But neither threats nor gentle words moved the princess.

"Give him half your kingdom if you must, only buy him off! " cried she. "I'll never marry him, never! "

The prince, to whom Longear passed on this conversation, was much saddened.

All of a sudden who should speak up but Felltree. "Do not grieve, prince," said he. "The world is not so small as the princess thinks. There are prettier and better mannered maidens than she in it. Let her pine away, for soon no one will want so much as to look at, to say nothing of marrying her. And as for the king, you must make him pay for having forfeited his word. Ask him to give you as much gold from his treasury as a man can carry away in a sack."

Felltree's words pleased the prince. On the following morning he went to see the king, and, hearing from him what he had already heard from Longear the night before, said:

"I will free the princess from her word and woo her no more if only you let me take as much gold from your treasury as a man can carry away in a sack."

The king, overjoyed to be let off so cheaply, has-

tened to agree.

"I thought the prince was wiser than that," said he to himself. "It doesn't seem to enter his head that gold is very heavy and that even the strongest of men can carry away only a little of it."

And at that they parted, both of them equally

pleased with the bargain.

Said Felltree when the prince was back at the inn again:

"Send your servants into town and tell them to buy up every piece of canvas they can find in the shops. After that call in fifty tailors and have them fold over the canvas six times and make a sack out of it. In that sack I will carry away the king's gold."

The prince did as Felltree told him, promising to reward the tailors richly if they had the sack ready by morning, and the tailors at once set to work. With what zeal they worked can only be imagined, for not for nothing is it said that the mistress of the house has only to put a roast of meat in the oven for the needle to start dancing in a tailor's hand. They sat bent over their sewing the whole night through, and the one care each had was how to keep his eyes from being accidentally put out by his neighbour's flying needle.

They finished the sack just before noon, having sewn each seam over twice, and were richly rewarded for it, getting enough to feast on for three days on

end if they chose.

Felltree now took the sack, and, throwing it over his shoulder, went with it to the treasury.

Seeing how huge was the sack, the treasurer said

with a laugh:

"Haven't you made a mistake, my good fellow? Your sack is far too large. If it was chaff you were after you shouldn't have come here."

"That's all right. At least the gold won't fall out of

it," said Felltree.

Talking in this way, they came to the storeroom, and when the doors were unlocked and they saw the barrels of gold within, the treasurer said in mocking tones:

"Is there enough gold here, do you think, to fill

your sack?"

"We'll see," Felltree replied. "How can I tell beforehand! When my master the prince came to your kingdom he thought he would be bringing home a young wife, and, as it has turned out, all the reward he will be getting is a little gold. Oh, well, a sack of gold is better than a wicked-tempered wife! "

"A pity you haven't brought a scoop with you! It's a slow and tedious business to fill a sack, especially one so large, without one."

"My late father," said Felltree, "used to say: 'If

you haven't a cup drink straight from the keg."

And lifting the first barrel of gold as if it was a bagful of down, he asked the treasurer to hold the sack for him and poured the jingling coins into it.

When he had done the same with the second and third barrels, the treasurer turned white as a sheet. Soon all the barrels stood empty but the sack was not even half full.

"Hasn't the king any more gold?" Felltree asked. "There is some in the chests by the wall but it's in bullions," replied the treasurer.

"Let's have it," said Felltree, and he emptied the

chests in the same way as he had the barrels.

When the storeroom had been swept clean of gold, Felltree heaved the sack on to his back and made off for the inn. And as for the treasurer, leaving the doors of the storeroom ajar, for he had no need any more of bolting and locking them, he ran as fast as his legs could carry him to the king.

When the king had heard him out he was filled with fear and ordered his daughter to be called in at once.

"See what a great misfortune you have brought upon us by your obstinacy!" cried he. "I am ruined and as poor as a church mouse! And a king without money is like one without hands. I cannot even war against my enemies! When my men hear that I cannot pay them they will run away from me."

"You mustn't leave things at that, you've got to get your gold back," said the princess.

But before they could make up their minds what to

do, the prince left the city.

"There is nothing for it now but to use force," the princess said. "Muster your host and send it after that knave of a prince. He could hardly have gone very far with a heavy load like that."

The king did as the princess told him and sent out his host in pursuit of the prince the very next day, the horse leading the way, the foot following and himself and his daughter making up the rear in a coach. To encourage his men the king said that a third of the gold they recovered would be theirs.

In the meantime the prince and his servants had put many miles between themselves and the city, and they might have gone much farther had not Felltree who carried the sack been obliged to travel on foot. For even if a good sum of money procured them enough horses, where could a wagon be found whose axles would stand up under so huge a weight?

When Felltree, the sack on his back, had made his way over a mountain and sat down for a rest at its foot, Longear told his friends what had been said in the palace and Keeneye declared that he could already see the host that had been sent after them.

The prince was troubled but Windmaker said:

"Let's move away from the mountain a little to make it easier for me to blow at the king's men when they reach the summit."

They went a little way further, and, finding a suitable spot, sat down there and waited.

No sooner did Keeneye announce that the first detachment of horsemen had reached the summit than Windmaker puffed out his cheeks and began to blow. And—o wonder of wonders!—like dust raised by a whirlwind the men and the horses were lifted high into the air, and, falling down again, were smashed to a pulp. The same fate overtook the foot. At last nothing remained on the mountain but the coach in which sat the king and the princess.

"Shall I blow at them, too?" asked Windmaker. "No," said the prince. "I will try to come to an agreement with them first."

And setting out in his coach, he drove up to the

king, bowed politely to him and said:

"You have lost everything, your gold and your host, and cannot rule over your kingdom. But give me your daughter in marriage, and an end will come to all your misfortunes."

"You can have her!" cried the king readily, for in truth there was nothing that he or the princess could do.

"That's settled then," said the prince, and he added:
"I will have your gold sent back to you at once. And
if you reign over your kingdom with wisdom and care,
new men will grow up in time to replace those you
lost today. Until then, my servants will keep watch
over your borders. One of them has sight so keen that
he can see the tiniest speck in the sky, the second has
hearing so sharp that he can hear a mouse scraping
deep underground, the third is so strong that he can
carry away all of the gold and silver found in a king's
treasury, and the fourth can blow so hard that he can
blow a whole army away."

They came back to the king's city, and soon after that the prince and the princess were married. Their wedding was rich and sumptuous and the festivities lasted for four whole weeks. The prince settled down with his young wife in the king's palace, and at his death ascended the throne and reigned over the kingdom for many, many years.





THE GRATEFUL PRINCE

Once upon a time the king of Kungla lost his way in a dense forest. Long did he wander in search of a path that might lead him out of it, but all in vain.

Suddenly an old man appeared before him.

"What are you looking for in this dark forest, my brother?" asked he. "There is nothing here but wild beasts."

"I have lost my way and am trying to find the road

to my house," the king replied.

"I'll be glad to help you," the old man said, "if you promise to give me in reward that which you set eyes on first when you get home."

The king thought this over and said:

"The first to meet me always is my dog, and he is the best hunting dog I have. But why should I give him up to you? I'll get out of here without your help sooner or later."

The old man heard him out in silence and vanished. The king wandered round in the forest for another three days and three nights till there was nothing left of the food he had brought with him, but no road did he find.

On the fourth day the same old man appeared before him again.

"Now do you agree to give me that which you set

eyes on first when you get home? "asked he.

But the king was stubborn. He declined to accept the old man's help and began to wander in the forest again. At last, so exhausted was he that he dropped down on the ground under a tree, feeling that his end had come.

The old man who was none other than the devil himself came up to him for the third time and said:

"Don't be a fool! Is your dog so dear to you that you are unwilling to part with him even to save your own life? Promise to reward me as I ask, and you will get home safe and sound."

The king resisted no more.

"My life is more precious to me than a thousand dogs!" cried he. "I have a whole kingdom on my

shoulders. So be it, I'll do as you say! Take me home."

No sooner had he uttered the last word than he found himself on the edge of the forest with the palace in full view.

He marched off home, and whom should he see first when he reached it but his little son. The boy was sitting in his nurse's lap, smilingly stretching out his hands to his father.

The king was frightened. He shouted at the nurse and told her to make haste and take away the child. Just then his dog came running up, joyfully wagging his tail, but all he got in return for his faithfulness was a kick. It often happens that servants that have done nothing to deserve it are made to pay for what is their master's fault.

When the king's anger had died down a little, he ordered his son, a pretty child, to be exchanged for the baby daughter of a poor peasant, a widower. The prince was taken to the peasant's humble hut and the peasant's little girl to the palace where she slept in the prince's cradle, under silken covers.

A year passed by and the Old Bachelor, for that is what Estonian peasants call the devil, came for his reward. He suspected nothing, and, thinking the little girl to be the king's daughter, carried her off with him. The king was overjoyed that his ruse had worked.

Time passed and the prince grew up and returned to his parents' house to live there in honour and luxury. But his life brought him no joy, for he found out at what cost he had been saved and could not reconcile himself to the thought that a little girl was being made to suffer through no fault of her own. He resolved to either save her or perish with her.

One day he dressed himself in the clothes of a peasant youth, put a sack of peas that weighed all of two poods on his back and set off for the forest in which his father had lost his way eighteen years before.

Once there, he began to wail and to cry very loudly indeed:

"Woe is me! Unhappy youth that I am! What wild place is this that I have come to and who is to lead me out of it? Why, there is not a living soul here!"

All of a sudden there stood before him a stranger, an old man with a long grey beard and a leather bag at his side, a true native of Tartu by the looks of him.

The old man greeted the prince in a friendly manner and said:

"I know these parts well and will lead you out of

the forest if you promise to pay me well for it."

"What can I, a poor peasant, give you!" exclaimed the prince who was a quick-witted young man. "I haven't a copper to my name. Even this caftan I have on is not mine but my master's, for I've had to hire myself out as a labourer for just the food and the clothes."

The old man looked at the sack of peas and said: "You're not so poor as all that, it seems to me! That sack you have on your back doesn't look very

light."

"There's nothing in it but peas!" the prince replied. "My old aunt who was the only close relation I had, died just the other night and she left not a copper. There wasn't so much as a handful of peas in the

house. And it's the village custom, you see, to give the people who sit out the night by the bedside of someone who has died soaked peas to chew to keep them from going to sleep. So I got my master to give me half a sack of peas, promising to do an extra round of work for him in return, and set out for the funeral. To get there faster I decided to cut across the forest, but lost my way."

"Oh, so you are all alone in the world!" the old man exclaimed, showing his teeth in a smile. "Would you like to work for me? I'm in need of a good workman

and I've taken a liking to you."

"I don't mind, if we can come to terms," the prince replied. "I've been a labourer ever since I can remember, another's bread is always bitter, and it's all the same to me what master to serve. How much will

you pay me a year?"

"You'll get fresh food every day," said the old man, "and meat twice a week. If you are sent out to work in the field far away from home I'll let you have some oil and some fish in addition to the bread. You'll have all the clothes you need and, on top of everything else, a plot of land big enough to plant four sacks of grain on."

"Agreed!" the prince replied. "They'll bury my aunt

without me. I'm coming with you."

This seemed to please the old man hugely. He spun round on one heel and then went into a dance, pounding the ground so hard that the trees that grew nearby swayed and creaked.

After a while the old man and his new workman set off on their way, the old man talking away pleasantly to make the time pass more quickly and never noticing that every ten steps or so his companion would slip a pea out of his sack and drop it to the ground. The two spent the night under a thick fir-tree and in the morning they moved on again.

By evening they came to a large rock. The old man stopped, looked round carefully, whistled and struck the ground three times with the heel of his left foot. The rock moved aside, and a secret door to an underground passage was revealed.

"Follow me!" cried the old man, seizing the prince's

hand.

Pitch darkness engulfed them, and it seemed to the prince that the road they were following was leading them deeper and deeper down. Soon a gleam of light appeared but it bore no likeness to the light of the sun or the moon.

The prince looked up in alarm but there was no sun and no sky above him. A hazy, luminous cloud drifted slowly over a world that was strange and unfamiliar. The land and the water, the trees and the grasses, the animals and the birds were all quite different from those on earth. But what struck the prince most was the dead silence that reigned throughout. Even the sound of his own footsteps drowned in it. Here and there, birds sat in the trees and they craned their necks and thrust out their breasts as if in song, but not a single note could be heard. The dogs opened their jaws as if to bark, the bulls lifted their horned heads as if to low, but no sound came. The water streamed over the rocky bed of a forest brook, the wind pressed down the crowns of the trees, the flies and the beetles flitted about, but soundlessly, without disturbing the quiet.

The old man uttered not a word, and when the prince tried to speak the sounds died in his throat.

A long time passed by, and still they plodded on. The prince's heart sank in fear, his hair stood on end, and cold shivers ran up and down his spine.

At last—o joy! —indistinct sounds reached his ear, and the phantom world about them seemed to come to

life.

They heard a noise as of a large herd of horses making their way across a quagmire, the water squelching under their hoofs, and the old man said, licking his lips:

"I can hear the porridge cooking in my kitchen.

This means they are expecting us."

They went on, and the prince seemed to hear a sawmill with no less than a dozen saws at work nearby. But his new master said:

"That is the Old Dame, my grandmother, snoring in

her sleep."

They went on again and ascended a mountain, and the prince saw his master's farm, which, so many buildings were there on it, looked more like a village.

Soon they came to the gate beside which stood an

empty dog-kennel.

"Into the kennel with you!" the old man cried. "And mind you stay there while I talk about you to the Old Dame. She is hard to please, like many old people, and cannot bear to have strangers in the house."

Trembling all over, the prince got into the kennel. He was beginning to repent of the recklessness that had brought him there.

After a time the old man returned and ordered the prince to get out of the kennel.

"You've got to remember one thing," said he in threatening tones, "and that is that you must live here according to the laws and rules that abide in my house. You'll fare badly if you don't."

And he added:

"You have ears and you have eyes; Use them, lad, if you are wise. Learn to listen and obey. Do as I, your master, say. To my questions make reply; For the rest keep mum or die."

The prince came into the house and whom did he see there but a pretty dark-eyed young girl.

"If the old man has such beauties as that around him I wouldn't mind marrying into his family," thought the prince. "I like that girl very much."

The girl said nothing as he came in. She was busy setting the table, and when she had done this. silently served supper. Then she went to the hearth, sat down near it on a little stool and began knitting a stocking. She never so much as glanced at the prince.

The Old Dame was nowhere to be seen, and the old man sat down at the table alone, but he did not invite the girl or his new workman to join him. There was enough food on the table for a dozen people at least. but, like the glutton that he was, he gulped it all down in a twinkling. When he stopped chewing he said to the girl:

"And now scrape out the pots and pans, and then you can eat your fill, the two of you. Only don't forget to leave the bones for the dog! "

The prince frowned at this, not liking the thought of eating someone's leavings, but his face brightened when he saw that there was enough there to make a good meal.

While they ate he kept stealing glances at the girl and would have given a great deal to be allowed to exchange a few words with her. But the moment he opened his mouth to speak, the girl would look at him imploringly as if begging him to keep silent. Willynilly, the prince had to speak with only his eyes. He ate with relish, hoping that it pleased the girl to see him enjoy the food she had cooked.

The old man had stretched himself out on a stove ledge and lay there, resting. When the girl and the prince finished eating, he said to the prince:

"You have two days in which to rest from your journey and take a look round the farm. But the day after tomorrow come to me and I'll set you a task for the next day. I always distribute the work in the evening so that by the time I get up in the morning everyone might be at his job. And now to bed! The girl will show you where your place is."

The prince was about to ask him something, but the old man turned dark with rage.

"Hold your tongue, you dog!" he roared. "Just try and break a rule of mine, and I'll make you shorter by a head. Off to bed with you! "

The girl beckoned to the prince and pointed to a door, inviting him to open it. He thought he saw her eyes fill with tears. The prince would have liked 11 to pause in the doorway, but he was afraid of the old man.

"Surely this sweet young girl is not his daughter," thought he. "One can see that she has a warm heart. I wonder if she is the girl my father gave to the Old Bachelor instead of me and because of whom I am here? ..."

The prince could not fall asleep for a long time. When at last he did, his sleep was restless and the dreams he saw, frightening. In them he was beset by all sorts of dangers, but every time this happened the girl appeared and came to his rescue.

In the morning he awoke with the resolve to obey the girl in everything, and, since they could not speak to each other, to read her wishes in her eyes. He found her already at work and began helping her zealously, bringing the water, chopping the firewood, starting a fire in the hearth and doing other household chores.

After dinner the prince looked round the yard and the buildings there and was much surprised at not seeing the Old Dame anywhere. In the stable there was a white horse and in the stockyard, a black cow with a white-headed calf. From the poultry-house, which was locked, there came a loud cackling, quacking and honking: many chickens, ducks and geese were evidently kept there.

The morning and midday meal proved as tasty and filling as the supper he had had the night before, and the prince might easily have become reconciled to his new way of life if he were not forced to keep silent all the time, and in the presence, too, of so lovely a girl!

On the following day the prince went to the old man for his orders.

"It's easy work you'll be doing tomorrow," said the old man. "You will take a scythe and cut as much grass for the white horse as it will need for the day and then you'll clean out the stable. But remember: if I look in and see that the feeding-rack is empty and there is dung on the floor, you will pay with your life for it! "

The prince was overjoyed.

"That's a trifling task and one I can easily cope with," thought he. "Of course, I've never handled a scythe in my life, but I am strong, and I've seen the peasants cutting grass time and again. Very deftly they did it, too.'

He was about to go to bed when the girl tiptoed into his room.

"What task have you been set for tomorrow?" asked she in a whisper.

"A trifling one," the prince replied. "I am to cut some grass for the white horse and clean out the stable, that's all."

"Oh, you poor, unhappy youth!" said the girl with a sigh. "It's a task beyond your strength. The white horse is none other than the Old Dame herself. So voracious is she that twenty mowers could not cut enough grass to satisfy her. And as for cleaning out the stable, why, it would take no fewer than ten men to do it! You cannot even hope to cope with it all by yourself. So listen to me and do what I tell you. Tomorrow, when you've brought the horse an armful or two of hay, take a thick willow switch and bend it into a hoop, and make sure the horse sees you do it. 1

Then take a large block of wood and cut a plug out of it. When the horse asks you, as she is bound to, what you need the hoop and the plug for, this is what you must say: 'The hoop is to stop you from eating too much hay. If I see that you are being overgreedy, I'll slip it on your muzzle and draw it tight around it, and I'll use the plug if I see you piling up too much dung on the floor!""

Having said this, the girl slipped out as quietly as she had come in, giving the prince no time even to thank her. But he took in all that she had said and went over it in his mind before going to bed.

Early the following morning the prince set to work.

He took a scythe and began to cut the grass, and in a few moments he had cut enough to make up several large armfuls.

Throwing one armful in the horse's feeding-rack, he ran off for a second one. What was his amazement on his return when he saw that the rack was empty and that there was enough dung on the floor to fill a wagon. Only now did he realise how wise the girl's counsel had been and that his life depended on his doing what she had told him to. Taking a willow switch, he began bending it into a hoop, and the white horse turned her head and asked in surprise:

"What are you going to do with that hoop, my lad?"

"Nothing much," the prince replied. "If I see you eating too much hay, I'm going to slip it on your muzzle and draw it tight around it."

The white horse heaved a deep sigh and at once

stopped chewing.

The prince cleaned out the stable and began cutting a wedge out of a block of wood.

"What are you going to do with that wedge?" asked the horse again.

"Nothing much," came the reply. "I'll use it for a plug if I see that the food passes through you too fast."

The horse glanced at him again and sighed. That she had understood him became clear when half the day had passed and the hay in the rack remained untouched and the floor clean. Then the old man came into the stable, and, seeing that everything was in perfect order, asked in surprise:

"Is it you yourself who is so wise or is it that you

have wise counsellors? "

To this the prince who was no simpleton replied:

"I have none to give me counsel but the foolish head on my shoulders."

The old man curled his lip angrily, and, muttering something to himself, left the stable. As for the prince, he was very pleased that everything had ended so well.

That evening the old man said to him:

"I have nothing suitable for you to do tomorrow, and as the girl is going to be very busy around the house, you'll have to milk the black cow. But mind that you milk her dry. If I squeeze even a drop out of her afterwards, you will pay with your life for it."

"That sounds like an easy job," thought the prince. "My fingers are strong and I ought to be able to cope with it, unless, of course, the old man hasn't some trick up his sleeve again."

He was about to go to bed when the girl came in.

"What task has the old man set you for tomorrow?" asked she.

"I'll be free most of the day," replied the prince

gaily. "All I am to do is milk the black cow."

"You poor, unhappy youth!" said the girl with a sigh. "Why, even if you keep at it from morning till night, you'll never get done, for the milk flows out of her in an endless stream. The old man wants to do away with you. But don't worry, nothing will happen to you while I'm here to help you. Just listen to me carefully and do exactly as I say. When you go to the cow-house tomorrow morning take with you a pot of live coals and a pair of tongs, the kind blacksmiths use. As soon as you come in, blow at the coals to fan the flame and then put the tongs in the pot. When the black cow asks you, as she is bound to, what you are doing, tell her what I am now going to whisper in your ear."

The girl whispered a few words in his ear and left

the room, and the prince went to bed.

In the morning, as soon as the first rays of the sun had painted the sky pink, the prince took a pot of live coals in one hand and a pair of tongs in the other and went to the cow-house where he proceeded to do just what the girl had told him to. The black cow kept glancing at him askance for a time and then she asked:

"What are you doing, my lad?"

"Nothing much," came the reply. "Just heating up the tongs a bit. They say that there are cows so wicked that they won't let themselves be milked properly. Now, I know of an excellent remedy for that. You milk the cow and then you squeeze her teats with a pair of red-hot tongs. That keeps her from letting any milk run out afterwards and wasting it."

The black cow, watching the prince's movements with a timid eye, sighed heavily.

The prince moved up a milk pail and milked her dry. In a little while he tried milking her again, but not

a drop could he squeeze out.

After a time the old man came in, but try hard as he would, not a drop of milk could he get out of the cow, either.

"Is it you yourself who is so wise or is it that you

have wise counsellors?" asked he angrify.

And the prince replied:

"I have none to give me counsel but the foolish head on my shoulders."

The old man stumped out in a rage, and when

evening came, he said to the prince:

"I have a small stack of hay still standing in the open that has to be carted away before the rains start in. Bring it home tomorrow but mind that not a single blade is left in the field or you'll pay with your life for it."

"That sounds simple enough," thought the prince.
"All I have to do is load the wagon, and the horse will carry the hay home. I'm not going to spare the Old

Dame whatever I do! "

By and by the girl looked in on the prince again.

Said the prince with a laugh:

"I think I'm going to learn to do everything the peasants do here. Tomorrow I am to bring home a stack of hay and see to it that not a single blade is left in the field."

"You poor, unlucky youth!" said the girl with a sigh. "You'll never be able to do it, never! Even if you had the whole village to help you and a week to

do it in, you wouldn't be able to cart away that hay. Take a heap from the top of the stack, and the same amount and more will grow up on the bottom. Listen to me and do what I say. Get up before dawn tomorrow, lead the white horse out of the stable and take along some thick rope. Tie the rope round the stack, harness the horse to it and yourself climb up on top of the stack and begin counting out loud: one, two, three, four, five, and so on. When the horse asks you what you are counting, this is what you'll say to her...."

And the girl whispered something in the prince's ear

and slipped out of the room.

Waking in the morning, the prince at once recalled what the girl had told him. He took a thick coil of rope, led the horse out of the stable, and, springing on her back, galloped off into the field. There he saw, contrary to what the old man had said, not a small but a huge stack of hay, as big as fifty ordinary stacks put together. He did just what the girl had told him to, and when he had climbed up on top of the stack, began counting out loud.

"What are you counting, my lad?" asked the white

horse in surprise.

"Oh, nothing much," the prince replied. "Only the wolves that have just come running out of the wood. But there are so many in the pack that I've quite lost count of them."

At the mere mention of wolves the white horse gave a jerk and a leap and started off at a gallop! Fast as the wind she went and was home in no time at all, bringing all of the hay with her. What was the old man's amazement when he saw the stack of hay in

the yard with his workman standing beside it before midday.

"Is it you who is so wise or is it that you have wise

counsellors?" asked he.

Said the prince:

"I have none to give me counsel but the foolish head on my shoulders."

Shaking his head in anger and muttering curses, the

old man stumped off.

In the evening the prince came to the old man for his orders.

Said the old man:

"Tomorrow you will drive the white-headed calf to pasture. But mind that he doesn't run away from you or you'll pay with your life for it."

"Many is the time that I've seen a village boy of ten or thereabouts pasturing a whole herd," thought the

prince. "Surely I can cope with one calf!"

He was about to go to bed when the girl came in to find out what task had been set him for the following day.

"A trifling one!" said the prince. "I am to take the

white-headed calf to pasture."

Hearing this, the girl heaved a deep sigh.

"You poor, unlucky youth!" said she. "You'll never be able to do it, never! Why, that calf rushes about like mad and can run round the world three times in one day! Listen to me and do as I say. Take this silken thread and tie one end round the calf's left leg and the other round the little toe of your left foot. Then you can be sure that the calf will always stay beside you, whether you are awake or asleep."

The girl went away and the prince went to bed, displeased with himself that he had again forgotten to thank her for her many wise counsels.

On the following morning the prince did just what the girl had told him to. Before taking him out to pasture, he tied the calf to himself with the silken thread, and the calf stayed by his side like a faithful dog and never moved away a step.

After sunset, as he was taking the calf home, the prince met the old man who asked him, frowning darkly:

"Is it you who is so wise or is it that you have wise counsellors?"

"I have none to give me counsel but the foolish head on my shoulders," the prince replied.

Muttering angrily to himself, the old man went away.

In the evening he gave the prince a small bag of barley and said:

"Tomorrow you are free. You can sleep the whole day long if you want. But you'll have to work hard this coming night! Sow this barley now, at once. It will come up and ripen fast. When it does, reap it and then thresh and winnow it. After that wait till the grains put forth shoots, for that will make for a better malt, and then grind them into flour and brew beer out of it. Go about it nimbly, with an eye on the clock, so that when I get up in the morning you can bring me a glass of fresh beer. If you don't, you'll pay with your life for it."

The prince left the old man in great confusion. Closing the door behind him, he burst into tears.

"This night will be the last in my life," said he between sobs, "for no mortal can do what I've been ordered to do. No one can help me, not even the girl with all her wise counsels. Was there ever anyone so unlucky as I! What made me behave so rashly? Why did I leave the king's palace and hurl myself straight in the arms of death? I cannot even send up a lament to the stars, for there is no sky overhead!"

As he stood there weeping, the bag of barley in his hands, the girl came up to him and asked why he was

so sad.

Said the prince through his tears:

"You and I are to be parted for ever, for my final hour has struck. Before I die there is something I want to confess to you. I am the only son of a king and might have become king myself one day. But now this is not to be. Goodbye, life! Goodbye, hope and happiness!"

And weeping bitterly, the prince told the girl what the old man had ordered him to do. He was not a little angered when he saw that the girl, far from being touched by his grief, was listening to him with a

smile.

Hearing him out to the end, she said, laughing:

"Calm yourself, my dear prince! Sleep peacefully tonight and spend your time as gaily as you wish tomorrow. But now listen to me and do as I say, even though I am no princess but a girl of humble birth. Take this little key. It is the key to the door of the third poultry-house where evil spirits over which the old man is master are kept. Throw your bag of barley over the threshold and repeat the old man's orders word for word, adding at the end: 'If you fail to do

what I have ordered in the smallest particular, you will all die. But, since the task is no easy one, know that there are those who will help you. Tonight, the doors to the seventh barn where your master's most powerful anisite are kept will at a lain."

ful spirits are kept will stand ajar."

The prince did what the girl had told him to and went to bed. In the morning he hastened to the brewery where the beer was already fermenting in the vats and the froth rising and dripping to the ground. The prince sampled the beer, strained some into a large jug and brought it to the old man to try just as he was getting up.

But instead of thanking the prince for having done

his work so well the old man hissed:

"You could not have thought all this up by yourself, someone has been helping you. Well, you just wait, I'll talk to you in the evening!"

Evening came, and he said to the prince:

"You needn't work tomorrow. But when I wake up in the morning, you must come up to my bed and shake my hand."

The old man's droll request amused the prince and he laughed as he told the girl about it. But the girl

looked troubled.

"Now you must beware!" said she. "The old man wants to eat you up tomorrow. Only one thing can save you. In the morning you must take an iron spade, heat it till it is red-hot and hold it out for the old man to shake instead of your hand."

The prince did as the girl said, and the spade was

red-hot long before the old man had wakened.

After a time they heard him calling angrily from his bed-chamber:

"Hey, there, you loafer, where are you hiding yourself? Why don't you come to say good morning?"

The prince at once came in and held out the red-hot spade. Seeing it, the old man brought out in whining tones:

"I am very ill today and too weak to shake your hand. Come in the evening, I'll give you my orders then."

The prince idled away the day, and in the evening came for his orders.

The old man greeted him kindly and said with a smile:

"I am very pleased with you. Come here tomorrow morning together with the girl. I know that you love one another and will help you to marry."

The prince wanted to sing and dance for joy, but remembering the old man's warning about making any

noise in the house, refrained.

Before going to bed he shared his happiness with the girl, thinking that she, too, would be overjoyed. To his surprise, the girl blanched and turned speechless with fear.

When she could move her tongue again, she said: "The old man has guessed that it was I who helped you and he wants to destroy us both. We must run away this very night. And now take an axe, go to the cow-house, cut off the calf's head with one blow and then split it in two with a second blow. In it you'll find a sparkling red ball which you must bring to me. I will do the rest."

Thought the prince:

"It is better to kill an innocent calf than to see one's loved one die and to die oneself. If we escape I will return to my home and family. The peas I scattered about must have sprouted by now and will help us find our way."

When the prince came into the cow-house the calf and the cow were lying side by side and sleeping so soundly that they never heard him. With the first blow of his axe he cut off the calf's head and with the second blow he split it in two. At once—o wonder of wonders! —it became light as day in the cow-house. for out of the calf's head there rolled a little red ball that shone as brightly as the sun. The prince picked it up, and, wrapping it carefully in a handkerchief, hid it in his bosom. All this time the cow had not wakened and only moaned in her sleep.

The girl was waiting at the gate, a small bundle in her hand.

"Where is the ball?" asked she.

"Here it is!" said the prince, holding it out to her.

"And now we must run!" the girl cried.

She turned back a corner of the handkerchief in which the magic ball was wrapped and it lighted the way for them like a lantern. As the prince had foreseen, the peas had sprouted and there was no danger that he and the girl might lose their way.

They hastened on, and the girl told the prince that she had chanced to overhear the old man telling the Old Dame that she was the daughter of a king and that he had taken her away from her parents by

cunning when she was still a child.

The prince, who might have told her far more about it, said nothing, but it cheered his heart to think that he had succeeded in rescuing her. By daybreak they had left a good part of the way behind them.

The old man woke late and had to rub his eyes for a time before sleep finally left him. His first thought was one of pleasure that he would soon eat up his two captives. He waited for a while, but when they failed to appear, decided that they were busy dressing up for their wedding. At last, losing patience, he called out:

"Hey, there, my lass! Hey, there, my lad! Where

have you got to?"

There was no reply, and he began scolding and cursing the two for their careless and slothful ways and shouting louder and louder. Since even this did not bring them, he got out of bed and went in search of them. He soon saw that they were not in the house and that their beds had not been slept in. He ran to the cow-house and only then, seeing the calf lying there dead with his head split in two and no magic ball in sight, understood what had happened.

So angry did this make him that he rushed to the door of the third barn in which the evil spirits were

kept and broke it down with one blow.

"After them! After them!" he roared. "Bring them back here at once! "

And the evil spirits swept away, flying as fast as the wind.

The two runaways had just come out on to a broad plain when the girl stopped all of a sudden and said:

"Something is wrong, for the ball has rolled round

in my hand. They must be after us."

Glancing behind her, she saw what looked like a black cloud that was fast gaining on them. So 1

she rolled the ball three times over her palm and said:

"Hear me, hear me, magic ball, For to you for help I call. Do not let my poor heart break, Turn me fast into a lake, And this youth, for so I wish, Turn, o ball, into a fish."

And no sooner were the words out of her mouth than she became a lake and the prince, a fish.

The evil spirits swept over them like a whirlwind

but soon turned back and flew home.

As soon as they had vanished from sight, the lake changed into the girl again and the fish into the prince, and they ran on without stopping.

The evil spirits came back to the old man, emp-

ty-handed.

"Did you see anything out of the ordinary on your way?" the old man asked.

"No," said they. "We saw nothing but a lake with

one fish in it."

At this the old man flew into a rage.

"You blockheads!" he thundered. "They were the ones! You should have known they were."

And he broke down the door of the fifth barn and let out the evil spirits that were kept in it.

"Drink up the lake," said he to them, "and then

seize the fish and bring it to me."

And the evil spirits swept away, flying as fast as the wind.

Meanwhile, the runaways had reached the edge of a

forest. All of a sudden the girl stopped and said in troubled tones:

"Something must be wrong, for the magic ball has rolled round in my hand."

Glancing behind her, she saw a cloud in the sky but one that was darker than before and had blood-red edges.

"They're after us!" cried she, and, rolling the magic

ball three times over her palm, said:

"Hear me, hear me, magic ball, For to you for help I call. Make you haste and don't delay, Let me be a rose-bush, pray, And to shield us from our foes, Turn this youth into a rose."

And lo and behold! —where the girl and the prince had stood a rose-bush sprang up with one rose on it.

The evil spirits swept noisily past overhead and after a few moments flew back again. They had not found the lake or the fish and had not so much as glanced at the rose-bush.

As soon as they had vanished, the rose-bush and the rose turned back into the girl and the prince. They rested a while and then set off again on their way.

"What?! You didn't find them?" cried the old man when the evil spirits returned, weary and out of breath.

"No," the oldest of the evil spirits replied, "we saw neither lake nor fish."

"And you noticed nothing out of the ordinary on the way?" the old man asked.

Said the oldest of the evil spirits:

"No. We only saw a rose-bush with one rose on it on the edge of the forest."

"Fools! Blockheads!" shouted the old man. "They were the ones! You should have known they were."

And he ran to the seventh barn and sent the most

powerful of his evil spirits after the runaways.

"Drag them here, dead or alive, no matter what shape they take!" he roared. "Tear out the rose-bush by the roots! Seize anything you see on the way!"

And the evil spirits swept off, flying as fast as a

whirlwind.

The prince and the girl had only just sat down in a shady forest nook to rest and to have a bite to eat when the girl exclaimed:

"Something is wrong again! The magic ball has nearly jumped out of my hand. They must be after us and getting close. It's just that we can't see them behind the trees."

She rolled the ball three times over her palm and said:

"Hear me, hear me, magic ball, For to you for help I call."
Make you haste and don't delay, Let me be a wind, I pray, And lest we be caught and die, Turn this youth into a fly!"

And that same instant the girl turned into a light wind and the prince into a tiny fly that began spinning about in the air.

The evil spirits swept over them like a thundercloud, but, not finding the rose-bush or the rose, flew home. No sooner were they out of sight than the wind turned back into the girl again and the fly into the prince.

"Now we must run as fast as we can!" cried the girl. "For the old man might go after us himself and

he will know us no matter what shape we take."

And off they went, running on and on till they reached a dark underground passage. They crawled inside, and, the magic ball lighting the way for them, ran up the passage which climbed higher and higher. Sore of foot and breathless, they got to a large rock, and the girl rolled the magic ball over her palm again three times and said:

"Hear me, hear me, magic ball, For to you for help I call. Push the rock aside that we Can at last feel safe and free!"

The same instant the rock moved aside, and the prince and the girl found themselves safely on earth

again.

"We're saved!" the girl cried. "No one has us in his power here and none will get the better of us by cunning. But now, my dear friend, we must part. You will go to your parents and I will go in search of mine."

"No," said the prince, "I don't want to part with you. Let us get married so that we can share joy and happiness as we have shared grief and sorrow."

At first the girl would not agree to this, but so hard did the prince plead that she could not refuse and went with him.

In the forest they met a woodcutter who told them that the palace and, indeed, the whole land was in mourning and had been for several years, ever since the king's son had vanished without trace.

With the help of the magic ball the girl got the prince some handsome clothes that he might appear before his father as befitted the son of a king. He was to go to him and arrange everything while she waited

in a peasant's hut.

But grief at the loss of his only child had so undermined the old king's strength that he died without learning of the prince's return. On his death-bed he repented of his sins, confessing that he had given up to the devil an innocent little girl.

The prince, being a good and loving son, wept over his father and buried him with all the honours due him. For three days he did not eat or drink, giving himself up wholly to his grief, and on the fourth day appeared before the people and was proclaimed king.

Calling together his councillors, he told them of the wonderful adventures he had had in the underground kingdom and of the girl who by her wisdom had saved his life.

"This girl must become your wife and our queen!" exclaimed the councillors with one voice.

When the young king came for his bride he was amazed to see her dressed as richly as any princess. So splendid were her clothes which she had got with the help of the magic ball that everyone took her to be the daughter of a king from some distant land.

They were married soon after, and the wedding was celebrated in great style, the festivities lasting for four whole weeks.



THE CLEVER PRINCESS

A certain king had a daughter, and so clever was she that it frightened people to speak with her. She could stop anyone's mouth and had only to utter a word for a man to be thrown into confusion and lose his powers of speech.

And so the king had it proclaimed far and wide that he would give his daughter in marriage to the one who got the better of her in an argument.

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Young men, all seeking to marry the princess, flocked to the palace. They came in such numbers that the place was packed with them. No sooner did one leave than others appeared. But not a man among them could out-talk the princess who always held her own in every argument.

However, so great was the incursion of wooers that the princess was beginning to feel quite worn out, for she had no time left to so much as comb her hair. And as for the old king, he was kept so busy that he slept in his clothes.

At length, vexed beyond endurance, the king announced that those who could not think of a sensible word to say and only came to the palace to play the fool would be severely punished.

The army of wooers melted away at once, and by the look of it the princess was now in danger of being left an old maid.

It was then that a young beggar, hearing that the princess would marry the one who got the better of her in an argument, said to himself:

"Why shouldn't I try my luck? If it turns my way, then I'll become the king's son-in-law; if not, not: I'll take my punishment and go."

And with these words the beggar set off for the palace.

He walked and he walked and he saw a dead crow lying in the road.

"Who knows but that it might come in handy!" said he to himself, and he thrust the crow into his sack.

He walked on and soon came across an old tub. "Who knows but that the tub may come in handy, too!" thought he. "I think I'd better take it."

And slipping the tub, cracked though it was, into his sack, he went on again.

By and by he found a stake, and then a hoop, and a little later, a ram's horn, and these, too, he picked up and took with him.

He reached the town, but not liking to look for lodgings there, asked a farmer from a nearby farm to let him in for the night. He told the farmer and his wife where he was going and why but they only laughed at him.

"What do you want to court trouble for! "said they.

"I'll be all right!" the beggar replied. "I have a mouth under my nose and a tongue in my mouth, so I'll find what to say to the princess."

On the following morning the beggar rose at dawn

and went straight to the palace.

"What do you want?" the king's servant asked him. "I have come to woo the princess!" replied the

"I have come to woo the princess!" replied to beggar.

The servant burst out laughing.

"Why should the princess want to talk with a foolish lad like you!" said he. "You'd better grow up and learn some wisdom first."

But the beggar would not take no for an answer and pleaded with the servant till at last he persuaded him to tell the princess what he was there for.

Said the princess when the servant told her that a

young beggar was waiting to see her:

"Well, if this young scamp is here to make fun of me, I won't be the least bit sorry to see him become shorter by a head."

And she asked the servant to show the beggar into

her presence.

"Greetings to you, o bride with hands of ice!" said the beggar as he came into the princess's chamber.

The princess was not at all put out.

"My hands are not cold," said she. "They are warm. Warm enough to roast a crow in."

"Let's see if that is indeed so!" said the beggar, and he brought the dead crow out of his sack.

The princess never batted an eye.

"Let's!" said she, and added: "Only won't the fat drip to the floor?"

"Not if we catch it in this tub!" said the beggar,

taking the tub out of the sack.

"The tub is cracked and might leak," returned the princess.

"Not if we draw this hoop round it tightly enough!"

the beggar said, bringing out the hoop.

"How can we do that?" said the princess, and she took the hoop and held it to the tub. "The hoop is too large for the tub and will hang loose!"

The beggar thrust his hand into the sack again.

"We'll make it fit with the help of this stake!" said he, pulling out the stake.

The princess saw that the beggar was getting the

better of her but did not like to admit it.

"You do twist so, my good lad!" said she. "You'll twist your tongue and yourself out of joint before you know it."

The beggar reached into his sack and drew out the ram's horn.

"Look at this horn!" said he. "Could anything be more twisted? Yet it's as sound and fine a horn as they come."

He waited for a reply but none came, for the princess could not think of anything to say.

There was nothing for it, and so she and the beggar were married, and so rich was their wedding as never before was seen!

And that was how a beggar became son-in-law to

the king himself.

So it's no use saying that you can't get anywhere by your wits because, of course, you can!





HOW A MAN STEPPED INTO HIS WIFE'S SHOES

A nagging husband was always telling his wife

what an easy time she had of it.

"I am in the field all day working like a mule," he would say to her, "while you loll about the house and fritter away the time. You do live in clover, I must say!"

Said his wife in reply one day:

"Well, then, why don't you and I change places?

I'll go out to the field for the day and you'll stay at home and take care of the house. Then we'll see whose life is easier."

The man was overjoyed.

"Good!" said he. "I'll stay home and do the housework tomorrow and you'll go out and mow the grass."

The next day was a Saturday, and the wife prepared to go out to do the mowing while her husband stayed home in her place.

Before leaving, not being sure that he knew what to

do, she explained his duties to him.

"When the shadow thrown off by a man gets to be two steps long I'll come home for dinner," said she. "Today is a Saturday, so make some porridge for dinner and churn some butter for it. And don't forget to drive the cow out to pasture."

The man only smiled.

"Don't worry, I'll manage. I know what to do."
The wife went away and the husband lighted a pipe and began to think what he should do for a start. Deciding to make the porridge first, he washed the cooking pot, filled it with water and put in the cereal.

All would have been well had not the pipe kept going out all the time, forcing him to interrupt his work and relight it again and again. Still, he did manage to start a fire under the pot, and he fanned the flames that the porridge might cook the faster.

The water in the pot soon began to gurgle and the man stood over it and stirred the porridge to keep it from burning. He forgot all about the cow that, wanting to be let out of the cow-house, began to moo.

"By the time I take the cow out to pasture and come back again, the porridge might burn," thought

the man. "I think I'd better add some water to it."

He went to the well for water, brought it back and began pouring it in the pot, but before he could stop himself had poured in so much that it overflowed and put out the fire. There was nothing to do but start one anew, and as he was doing it the cow began mooing again louder than ever.

"You wait, I'll let you out in a moment!" the man

cried. "Just let me start the fire."

But the wood was wet and refused to burn and he had to add some chips to it before it caught fire at last. The cow was mooing loudly again, and the man was forced to go to her. He came up to the cow-house and said to himself:

"While I'm driving the cow out to pasture, either the porridge will burn or the fire will go out. I think I'll tie the cow by the outhouse somewhere and let her pick at the grass that grows near it, it's as nice and thick there as anywhere."

And throwing a rope round the cow's neck, the man led her to the outhouse, tied her there by the leg and

himself went back again to cook the porridge.

As he was on his way to the kitchen he remembered that he had not yet churned the butter. So he went, to the barn to get the sour-cream and the churn.

He began churning the butter, but, feeling thirsty, threw down the spoon, jumped up and ran to the barn again where stood a barrel of kvass, forgetting in his haste to close the door to the kitchen. Now, a sow and her seven piglets were out walking in the yard at the time. Seeing the door standing open, the sow decided to see that was behind it. She slipped into the kitchen and the seven piglets ran in after her.

The man saw them just when he had tipped the barrel of kvass and put his lips to it. Remembering that the bowl of sour-cream was standing on the kitchen floor, he jumped up and rushed to the house, leaving the barrel tap open.

He ran into the kitchen and what did he see but the sow sloshing the sour-cream over the floor. Snatching up a log, he flung it at the sow and struck her on the snout, and the sow fell flat on her back and died. The man flew into a rage, drove the piglets out of the kitchen and dragged the dead sow out into the yard.

All of a sudden it came to him that he had left the barrel tap open. He rushed into the barn only to find the barrel empty and the floor flooded with kvass. What was he to do?

He looked round the barn to see if there was any more sour-cream left to make butter of and, finding some, set to work when it suddenly occurred to him that the empty barrel might crack as it dried.

He ran to the well for water, but, fearing that one of the other animals might get into the kitchen, took the churn with him. He put it on the edge of the well and in letting down the pail knocked it against the churn which fell into the well with a splash!

A fine kettle of fish this had turned out to be! Now that the sour-cream was in the well, there was no way of getting it out again and they would have to do without butter.

As he was filling the barrel with water the man remembered the porridge. A smell of something burning came from the kitchen.

Said the man, trying to comfort himself:

"The smell doesn't really matter. The important

thing is for the porridge to taste good."

He tried the porridge and decided that it was passable and if butter were added to it would be quite good. So off he went to the barn again to see if there wasn't some butter of the old stock left over. He looked but found nothing. At last, seeing a large barrel, he thought that his wife might have put a jug of butter in it. He bent over the edge of the barrel to see and fell in head first!

Now, as it happened, there was flour on the bottom of the barrel, and it made the man sneeze again and again. He badly wanted to climb out of the barrel, but struggle hard as he would, could not.

The wife came home for dinner. She began looking

for her husband but did not see him anywhere.

The sow lay in the yard, dead, the kitchen floor was sticky with sour-cream, the cow was stretched out by the outhouse, her leg broken, and the porridge in the pot was burnt to a cinder, but he was nowhere to be found.

Off went the wife to the barn, she looked in the barrel, and lo!—there he was. She helped him out of it and shook the flour off him and she had the good sense not to scold him for having made such a mess of things. She tidied everything, cooked some more porridge, had some herself and fed her husband, and thus the day ended.

From that day on the man nagged his wife no more and never said that she had an easier time of it than he.





HOW AN OLD MAN WAITED FOR DEATH

There was once a farmer who had many children. Time passed and his sons and daughters were all married, and the oldest son and his wife waited for him to give them his farm. But the old man was still strong and had no wish to give up farming.

Still, he did have thoughts of death and knew that sooner or later the farm would pass into his son's

hands.

So off he went to see a sage and learn from him how many years of life were left to him.

The sage looked at the old man and said:

"You'll know your death has come when you have sneezed three times."

Much saddened, the old man went off home. On he walked and all he thought about was how to keep from sneezing.

He had only just come into his own front yard when he suddenly felt a tickling in his nose and gave a great sneeze!

"O Heavens me, I've only two more sneezes left!"

sighed the old man.

On the following day he went to the mill to grind grain. The dust there got into his nose and he sneezed again.

"There is nothing to be done!" sighed the old man. "I have one last sneeze left and then my end will

come."

And out he ran from the mill so as not to sneeze for the third and last time. But the flour was ready and had to be taken away. So back he came inside again, threw the sack of flour over his shoulder and made for the door.

By that time his nose was full of dust and the old man felt that he was going to sneeze. He tried not to but could not stop himself.

"A-tishoo!" went he.

"O Heavens me, here am I dead!" sighed the old man, and, dropping his sack, stretched himself out on the ground.

Seeing the sack of flour, the miller's hogs came running up and began tearing at it.

The old man looked at them and sighed.

"You villains you!" thought he. "Were I alive I'd

have shown you, but what can a dead man do! "

Just then the miller came out into the yard. What was his surprise when he saw the hogs tearing at the sack of flour while its owner lay there and did nothing.

"What are you doing?" asked he.

Said the old man in reply:

"Why, just lying here, of course! What else can I do now that I'm dead? Were I alive I'd have driven off your hogs. Do me a favour, will you, and drive them off for me."

The miller was more surprised than ever.

"Oh, so you're dead!" said he. "How very sad that

He took a whip and began flogging the hogs and he sent the whip flying over the old man's back, too.

Up jumped the old man from the ground.

"Thank you for bringing me back to life," said he.

"If it weren't for you I'd be dead still."

With this he heaved the sack of flour on to a wagon and drove home. And he won't hear about dying to this day!



LITHUANIAN FAIRY TALES









HOW A WOODPECKER CHOPPED A SPRUCE-TREE

A woodpecker once flew up to a spruce-tree, lighted on its very top, and, rocking back and forth, sang:

"I will chop this spruce-tree down, Make a cudgel of its crown, Wave it once and at a blow Every beast I see lay low!"

The rabbit heard him and was frightened to death. Away he ran as fast as his legs could carry him and he met a wolf. "Where are you running so fast, Squinteyes?" the wolf asked him.

Said the rabbit:

"We're in terrible danger, Wolf. For on top of the spruce-tree yonder there sits a woodpecker, and do you know what I have just heard him say? Listen to this:

'I will chop this spruce-tree down, Make a cudgel of its crown, Wave it once and at a blow Every beast I see lay low!'"

The wolf was frightened and away he ran together with the rabbit. By and by they met a fox.

"Are you two out of your minds to be rushing like

that?" asked she. "Where are you going?"

"Oh, Mistress Fox, we're in terrible danger. On top of the spruce-tree yonder there sits a woodpecker, and do you know what we've just heard him say? Listen to this:

'I will chop this spruce-tree down,
Make a cudgel of its crown,
Wave it once and at a blow
Every beast I see lay low! '"

The fox was frightened, so she joined the rabbit and the wolf and away they ran together. By and by they met a boar.

"Where are you rushing to—a ball or a christen-

ing? " asked the boar, and he added:

"I will come along if so, For I love to eat, you know. Good, rich food and acorn beer Both the heart and palate cheer." Said the rabbit, the wolf and the fox in reply:

"No, friend Boar, it's not a ball We are going to at all.

We are in terrible danger. On top of the spruce-tree yonder there sits a woodpecker, and do you know what we have just heard him say? Listen to this:

> 'I will chop this spruce-tree down, Make a cudgel of its crown, Wave it once and at a blow Every beast I see lay low! '

So we are on our way to hold counsel

And decide what we must do Without flurry or to-do."

The boar joined the rabbit, the wolf and the fox,

and away they ran together.

By and by they met a bear. He was on his way home from the house of his uncle, the two of them having robbed a beehive together, and was still chewing on a piece of pie. Seeing them, the bear stopped.

"Where are you running, neighbours?" asked he. "I never expected to see Ploughman the Boar, Sprinter the Rabbit, Red Tail the Fox and Grey Coat the Wolf together. Why are you in such a hurry? Who is chasing you? You are not going off to war, are you?"

Said the four of them in reply:

"Hear us out while we explain And don't wag your tongue in vain. Dark the skies above us loom, We are plunged in awful gloom. For on top of the spruce-tree yonder there sits a woodpecker, and do you know what we have just heard him say? Listen to this:

I will chop this spruce-tree down, Make a cudgel of its crown, Wave it once and at a blow Every beast I see lay low!"

The bear was frightened, he joined the rabbit, the wolf, the fox and the boar, and away the five of them ran together. They talked among themselves and decided that they would die rather than let the woodpecker chop down the spruce-tree!

Gathering up courage, they ran up to the sprucetree in which the woodpecker sat and called out with

one voice:

"Look here, Woodpecker, listen to us! Do not chop down the spruce-tree or make the cudgel. Let us all live together in peace like the good neighbours that we are."

But the woodpecker who was still perched on the very top of the spruce-tree cried again:

"Go away or you'll be sorry!

For I'll chop the spruce-tree down, Make a cudgel of its crown, And whoever ventures near— Thump! —will get it on the ear! "

At this the five friends set up a great noise. They shouted at the top of their lungs that they would not let the woodpecker chop down the spruce-tree, and, clasping the tree, held on to it for dear life.

Said the woodpecker:

"I'll set me to work in a moment, just as soon as I

have whetted my axe."

"Listen to me, all of you!" cried the bear. "You push at the spruce-tree from your side, Wolf and Boar, and Fox and I will push at it from ours. That way we'll hold it up nicely and it won't fall. As for you, Rabbit, you prop it up with your shoulder and do your best, mind!"

"All right!" piped the rabbit, only to cry out the next moment: "Whoa there, brothers, I believe the woodpecker has started chopping. A chip has just

fallen on my tail."

"Hold it tight!" the wolf cried. "It's toppling over to

our side! "

At this they all came together and set to pulling at the spruce-tree, the wolf and the boar from one side and the bear from the other till little by little it began to rock and to sag and then all of a sudden—crash!—broke in two. The wolf and the boar fell to the ground with a thump, the rabbit, the bear and the fox fell on top of them, and they all called out together:

"Please, Woodpecker, have a heart and don't kill us!"
The woodpecker flew up into the air and then

settled on another spruce-tree.

"Think before you make me frown— I have chopped the spruce-tree down!"

cried he.

And the bear said over and over again in piteous

tones:

"And I thought I was holding it ever so tight! Oh, that woodpecker! I've never seen anyone so strong as he!"



ROOSTER SING-TRUE COCK-A-DOODLE-DOO

Lassies and laddies
tiny as peas,
Listen to this tale of mine,
if you please!

In our yard there once lived a rooster and a hen. The rooster was called Sing-True Cock-a-doodle-doo and the hen, Cackle-Cack. The two of them always had plenty to eat:

crumbs galore, all sorts of seeds, worms big and small, grasses and weeds.

From morn to night Sing-True Cock-a-doodle-doo

and Cackle-Cack

strolled about and dug at the ground and cackled in glee

when a worm they found.

Shaking his comb as if in play,

this is what Sing-True

would up and say:

"Cock-a-doodle!

Here's a worm like a noodle."

And Cackle-Cack would reply:

"Cack-cackle, cack-cack,

He'll do for a snack.

Cut him up in two— I want some, too! "

And thus it was that Sing-True Cock-a-doodle-doo and Cackle-Cack passed their days.

They worked very hard for their livelihood

and they shared all they found

in the way of food.

But what grieved them sorely and made them cry, though there wasn't a cloud in the whole of the sky,

was

that they had no children to bring them joy, not one yellow chick, either girl or boy.

"Cock-a-doodle-doo!

What am I to do?"

Cock-a-doodle-doo would say with a sigh: "When I die who will get my red cap and sharp spurs?"

But one day Cackle-Cack laid an egg, not an ordinary one, but one of gold, and hatched a chick, a little son.

He was fluffy and small and white of breast and of all the chicks by far the best!

His mother and father were so delighted with him that they could not take their eyes off him.

Said Cackle-Cack:

"Let us call him Yellow Nose, so the wasps don't dare come close."

"Oh, no, a name like that would only suit a crow!" said Sing-True Cock-a-doodle-doo. "If we want our son to be feared by all.

fox and ox and kite and hawk, we must call him Twitter-Squawk."

But this Cackle-Cack would not stand for. Said she: "You must be out of your mind! I never heard of such an ugly name. Twitter-Squawk indeed!"

Sing-True Cock-a-doodle-doo was very angry.

"Cock-a-doodle-doo!

It's up to me, not you! "

cried he, flapping his wings.

"But I don't want to make you weep, so let the chick be called Cheep-Cheep!"

To this the mother agreed, and the matter of the chick's name was settled.

But they had hardly celebrated Cheep-Cheep's name-day and treated their friends to a pail of beer and ale when a terrible misfortune occurred: Sharp-Beak the Hawk, the fiercest hawk of them all,

carried off Cackle-Cack, and she never came back!

Cheep-Cheep wailed and cried for days on end.

Time passed, and Sing-True Cock-a-doodle-doo grew tired of

sitting at home looking after his son and never having a moment's fun.

So he soon found himself a new wife and brought her home to live with them. Her name was Speckle and she disliked Cheep-Cheep and treated him badly.

One day an egg cracked under Speckle's wing and a chick was hatched out of it, a naked, ugly little

thing.

Sing-True Cock-a-doodle-doo wanted to call his second son Angry or Mighty or even Fierce, but Speckle put her foot down, for she felt

that her son was born to fame and deserved a better name.

"No, no!" cackled she.

"None can compare to this chick of mine, so let's choose him a name

that is really fine.

Never was there a chick like him, so fluffy and yellow and straight of limb!

In olden times, so my grandmother says, chickens lived to a hundred if they had long names. I want my son to have a long life, too, so this is the name I have thought up for him:

Little yellow fluffy ball,
Best and dearest chick of all;
Not another on the farm
Boasts such beauty, wit and charm;
Has a voice as loud and clear
As a grown-up chanticleer;
Being Sing-True's rightful heir,
Wears his father's prideful air;

Being Speckle's firstborn son, Is a joy to look upon; Little yellow fluffy ball. Dearest chick among them all."

Sing-True Cock-a-doodle-doo

agreed to the name.

but was cross all the same.

"It's so long that by the time you get to the end of it.

> you can be born, grow up and die! " said he with a sigh.

As for Cheep-Cheep, the poor little orphan whose name was so short and easy to say, much sorrow fell to his lot. Whenever his stepmother Speckle wanted someone to help her or Sing-True, she would call him, crying:

> "Come, Cheep-Cheep, wake up and don't sleep! Light the stove and sweep the floor.

bring some water

and close the door! "

Nor was he treated much better by his father. For Sing-True, too lazy to call out his younger son's long name, would more often than not address Cheep-Cheep instead, telling him to do this or that.

"Help your father, Cheep-Cheep!

Find me a puddle that's not too deep,"

he would say, or:

"Let's look for worms under this stone,

I cannot be doing it all alone! "

And the orphan was kept rushing about the yard all day while his half-brother loafed in the sun doing

nothing at all. But one day he got into trouble, for while with his friends he was at play

he lost Sing-True's chisel and pipe of clay.

Sing-True was very angry, and, wanting to punish him, flew up on to the fence and called for the whole yard to hear:

"Little yellow fluffy ball, Worst, most stubborn chick of all; Not another on the farm Boasts so little wit and charm. No, it's not the time for tears— First, I mean to box your ears!"

But before Sing-True could come to the end of his son's name and tell him what he meant to do with him, the chick ran away and hid in a growth of nettles.

And so it went.

Once, when Cheep-Cheep was busy pecking at some hemp seeds, a fox came stealing up from the forest.

Had she caught the chick, let me tell you, friend,

I would now have been at my story's end.

But this she could not do, for Cheep-Cheep called out at the top of his voice:

"He-e-e-elp! The fox has got me!"

Sing-True Cock-a-doodle-doo heard his son's voice, and, flying up on to the roof, crowed for the whole vard to hear:

"Cock-a-doodle-doo!

Come to me, pigs, come, dogs and sheep, for Mistress Fox has caught Cheep-Cheep! If you have sharp claws and are quick on your feet,

help me rescue my son, I beg and entreat! "

The pig heard him and jumped up.

"Oink-oink-oink!

Wait for me, Sing-True, I'm coming with you! "

she cried.

The sheep heard him and started basing and bleating.

"We're coming too, to give fox her due! "

called thev.

The dogs heard him, they began barking loudly and made more noise than anyone.

"Bow-wow-wow!" went they.

"Away we go

Mistress Fox to lay low! "

And the fox, she of the fluffy tail, was frightened and let go of Cheep-Cheep. Thus was his life saved and he returned home unharmed.

The fox, however, was a wily one and she was hungry, too. So she kept her eyes open and

at break of day,

with the sun's first ray,

crept up to the yard again.

Not meeting anyone who could stop her,

she up and seized Speckle's plump little son and, in a twinkling, was away and gone!

Speckle heard her beloved son's cry and rushed to save him, cackling loudly.

> "Come, pigs! Come, sheep, wake up, I pray, before Mistress Fox has run away! "

she cried.

"If you have sharp teeth and are quick on your

run and stop the thief, I beg and entreat!

She has stolen

Little yellow fluffy ball,

Best and dearest chick of all:

Not another on the farm

Boasts such beauty, wit and charm....

Cluck, cluck, cluck, cluck! ..."

"Oink-oink!" said the pig.

"Though of wit I'm keen as keen,

I don't know just whom you mean! "

"Bow-wow-wow!" said the dog.

"What a foolish hen and slow!

Whom she means I do not know."

At this Sing-True Cock-a-doodle-doo sang out:

"Cock-a-doodle-doo! I'm sorry, friends, my wife Speckle has got a little muddled. What she meant to say was that the fox caught

Little yellow fluffy ball,

Best and dearest chick of all:

Not another on the farm

Boasts such beauty, wit and charm;

Has a voice as loud and clear

As a grown-up chanticleer:

Being Sing-True's rightful heir,

Wears his father's prideful air;

Being Speckle's firstborn son,

Is a joy to look upon;

Little yellow fluffy ball,

Best and dearest chick of all! "

Only then did the pigs, sheep and dogs understand what had happened. Off they rushed after the fox, 18

firing their guns and clapping their hands, yelling and calling and shouting commands.

But it had taken Sing-True Cock-a-doodle-doo so long to speak his son's name that by the time he got to the end of it

the fox was out of sight and deep in the

wood

and they couldn't catch her try as they

would.

Soon nothing was left of Speckle's young son—the poor little loafer was dead and gone.

And as for Cheep-Cheep,

he grew up to be handsome and tall and was loved and made much of by one and all!





THE HEDGEHOG AND HIS BRIDE

Once upon a time there was an old man who made a living by making and selling brooms.

One day he went to the forest for switches. All of a sudden who should appear out of nowhere but a hedgehog. Back and forth he scurried and never left the old man's side. The old man sat down to have a bite to eat, and the hedgehog bustled about at his feet, now picking up a bread crumb, now licking a

drop of milk from his boot. The old man took a liking to the little animal, and, putting him in his cap, brought him home.

In the morning the old man and his wife woke up, they looked and they saw that all the plates in the house had been washed and set carefully on the shelves, the pots and pans scrubbed till they shone, the floor swept clean and sprinkled with sand, the water brought in, the firewood chopped and stacked and the fire in the stove started. And there was the hedgehog sitting on a stool and snorting, busily at work sewing up the old man's pants with one of his own needles.

The old man and his wife were very pleased with the hedgehog for being so hardworking. They decided to keep him and to take him for their own son and

they named him Prickly.

Prickly grew up and bethought him of getting married. And it was not just anyone he wanted to marry but the king's daughter herself and none other! He begged his new father to go matchmaking and ask for the hand of the king's daughter in his behalf.

The father, loving Prickly dearly, went to the king

and said:

"Will you not agree to let your daughter marry my Prickly, Sire?"

"Bring him here and we'll see!" replied the king.

The old man came home and told Prickly all about it, and Prickly turned it over in his mind and said:

"The king was right to ask to see me. Let us

go to him! "

The old man tied a silk ribbon round the hedgehog, stuck a white clover in it, and, putting him in his cap,

brought him to the king.

The king took one look at the bridegroom and burst out laughing. He laughed so that his beard shook.

"A fine bridegroom you've brought us!" cried he.

But the old man began praising the hedgehog and

saying how clever and hardworking he was.

"Very well," said the king, "I'll let him have my daughter in marriage if only he cleans my cow-house of all the dung that has piled up there in the last five years, strews it over the field, ploughs three hundred tithes of land, grows the wheat and reaps it, threshes and grinds the grain and then bakes pies out of the whole of the flour."

The old man heard him out and was filled with sorrow. But the hedgehog said, trying to comfort him:

"Do not grieve, father. I'll try to cope with the work somehow. Only take me to the king's cow-house."

The old man brought him to the cow-house and the hedgehog cried:

"Come, dung, get into the wagons and make off for the field!"

And at once the dung loaded itself into the wagons and rode off for the field.

The hedgehog began running up and down the unploughed field.

"Come, field, plough yourself!" he cried, and the

same moment the field was ploughed.

"Come, field, harrow yourself!"—and at once the field was harrowed, a cloud of dust rising over it.

"Lie straight as strings, furrows! "—and at once the furrows stretched across the field straight as strings.

"Drop into the earth, grain!"—and the grains of wheat dropped of themselves into the furrows.

"Come up and ripen, golden wheat!"—and the wheat at once came up and ripened.

"Be cut and gathered into sheaves!"—and the

wheat gathered itself up into sheaves.

"Dry the grain, sun!"—and the sun dried the grain. "Lie down on the threshing-floor, ears of wheat! "-and the ears of wheat lay down on the threshing-floor.

"Be threshed and ground to flour, grain!"—and the

grain was threshed and ground to flour.

"Bake yourselves, pies, and then climb into the wagons and ride off to the king's palace! "-and the pies baked themselves, climbed into the wagons, and, warm and fragrant as they were, rode off to the palace. A hundred wagon-loads they made up all in all, and the hedgehog rolled ahead of them and pointed out the way.

Seeing that the hedgehog had done what had been asked of him and not wanting to go back on his word, the king summoned his daughter, showed her her bridegroom and bade her get ready for the

wedding.

The princess could not very well disobey her father's command, so she and Prickly were first be-

trothed and then married.

Late at night after the wedding feast when his young bride had gone to bed, the hedgehog cast off his prickly skin, hid it behind the stove and turned into a young man so handsome that he seemed to light everything about him, just like the sun.

The king's daughter woke from a fitful sleep and was overioved to see the tall and handsome youth in

place of the loathsome hedgehog.

At daybreak the hedgehog got back into his prickly skin again and began scurrying about from one chamber to another, snorting and sniffing as he did so. But as soon as darkness set in he again cast off his needles and turned into a handsome youth.

One morning the king's servant came in to clean the chambers, found the hedgehog's skin behind the stove and threw it in the fire together with the sweepings.

The youth woke up, he looked for his skin but could not find it anywhere. This made him very angry

and he said to the king's daughter:

"It was an evil magician who turned me into a hedgehog. Now I must go off beyond the far seas and you won't see me for seven years. And before I go I will put a magic spell on you: whatever you touch will turn to iron."

Off he went beyond the far seas, leaving his young wife behind him, and whatever she touched was at once covered with a thick coat of iron. She touched her legs and they turned to iron. She passed her hand forgetfully over her forehead and her forehead turned to iron, too. This was a harsh punishment indeed and the king's daughter suffered cruelly and wept because of it.

Cursing her lot and moving her feet with difficulty, she came to the house of the old broom-maker. the hedgehog's adopted father, and begged him to find his son and ask him if there was anything she could do or if she was fated to die thus bound in

iron.

The old man took pity on his daughter-in-law and at once made ready to set off beyond the far seas.

It was not for a year nor yet for two years but for many-many years that he was on his way, and he was

all grown with moss like an old tree stump by the time he got to where he was bound for.

He came out on to the shore of the sea and called: "Come, Prickly, come, my son, swim out to me!"

The son turned into white sea foam, and, as a wave carried him to shore, asked:

"Why are you here, father? Why cannot you leave me in peace?"

The father told him of his young wife's sufferings and Prickly heard him out and said:

"Let her come here herself!"

By the time the father came back home many more years had passed and he had turned into an old and feeble man. He told his daughter-in-law what she had to do, and, bound in iron though she was, off she set on her way, dragging her feet with difficulty.

A year went by, and another, and when at last she got to the shore of the sea she, too, like her father-inlaw before her, was all grown with moss. She stood there and waited, and her husband turned into white

foam, and, floating out to her, said:

"Listen to me. When evening comes you will see white foam by the very shore and red foam just beyond. Wait till the half-moon appears in the sky and

then scoop up a handful of the white foam."

With these words he vanished in the deep, and the wife waited till evening came and then did just as he had told her. The moment the half-moon had risen, she scooped up a handful of white foam, and there before her stood her husband in the guise of a tall and handsome youth.

"We must swim the sea," said he. "Are you not afraid, my wife?"

"No, I am not," the princess replied.

"Then put your arms round my neck and hold tight." She put her arms round his neck and they swam the sea.

"Now we must pass through flame, for some dragons have made up a fire as hot as the fire of hell in our path. Are you not afraid, my wife?"

"No, I am not," said she.

"Then put your arms round my waist and hold tight."

The princess put her arms round her husband's

waist and they passed through the roaring flames.

"Do you see that old oak-tree yonder?" asked the husband after a time. "As soon as we reach it the evil witches waiting there will turn us into loathsome toads. Are you willing to become a toad's wife and spend two years under a porch?"

"I am!" the princess firmly replied.

The witches turned them into toads, and the princess and her husband lived under a porch for two whole years and only got back their proper shape at the end of them.

They came home at last, and in the best and gayest of spirits, and the old king held such a feast in their honour that all the cats and dogs in the kingdom, smelling the good things roasting and boiling in the palace kitchen, came running there.

I was at the feast, too, and with great good will ate and drank my fill.

I had on a hat of butter and a caftan of paper and shoes of glass, and I was taking a trayful of wine glasses to the chamber when, as luck would have it, I stumbled, the glasses rolled down on to my shoes and were smashed and the hat fell off my head and was eaten up by the dogs. Now, this made me feel very bad indeed, so off I ran to the cow-house, dug myself in under a bundle of tow and lay there. Some servants came in, they gathered me up together with the tow and thrust me in a cannon. Boom! went the cannon, and out I shot and flew across the sky. There was a roof in my path, so—c-r-r-rash!—I passed through that and dropped straight in a German pastor's bed. Down crawled the pastor under the bed, and, trembling with fear, cried:

"O Lord! O Lord!"

But as I did not know his tongue all I said was:

"Go to sleep, go to sleep!"

So we both went to sleep and slept the night through, I in the bed and the pastor under it.





THE WASHERWOMAN AND THE COUNT

One day some washerwomen from a count's estate were out on the lake rinsing their washing, and they began talking amongst themselves.

"I will only marry a man who is tall and has blue

eves," said one.

"And I'll only marry a man who is rich," said

another.

"I don't care if I'm showered with gold and dressed in silks, I'll never marry an old man and one

I don't love," said the youngest and prettiest of them.

"Catch us believing you!" laughed her friends. "What if the count should ask you to marry him?"

"I'd rather die than live with that old fossil. I don't need his riches! "

Now, as fate would have it, the count happened to be walking along the lake just then together with his steward. Hearing what the washerwomen were saying, he said to him:

"Tomorrow you will bring the third of those maids to my palace. She is far too proud for one so poor."

On the following day the count opened his late wife's wardrobe and took out her best gowns and dresses of silk, her amber necklaces and her gold bracelets and earrings. His servants laid out all these riches in the large hall of the palace and it was there that the steward brought the young washerwoman. The count showed her the silks and jewels and said:

"That is your dowry. Will you marry me?"

The girl burst into tears.

"No, sir, I will only marry a man I love," said she. The count was very angry that a simple girl, a bondswoman of his, should turn him down despite his riches and high birth.

"You will knit me three waistbands by morning," said he, "the first as bright as the sun, the second as bright as the moon, and the third as bright as the stars. If you fail to do this in time I will have your head chopped off."

The girl left the palace and went to the lake, weep-

ing bitterly.

The laumes or witches who lived beyond the lake

heard her and ran up to her.

"Why do you cry, pretty maid?" asked they. "Why do you sigh so heavily?"

The girl told them of her sorrow and the laumes

began trying to comfort her.

"Here is a soft pillow for you," said they, "and a quilt and a shift. Do not grieve and go to sleep."

One of the laumes made a bed for her, another sang her a song and between them they lulled the girl to sleep.

She slept very sweetly, and in the morning when she opened her eyes what did she see hanging on a tree branch and gleaming in the sunshine but three waistbands, their brilliance set off by the morning rays. One of the waistbands was as bright as the sun, the second, as bright as the moon, and the third, as bright as the stars.

The girl was overjoyed and took the waistbands to the count who, though he admired their beauty, was

too hard of heart to be moved by it.

"You must bring me a coach by morning which can be hidden away in a nut-shell," said he. "When I ride in it there must be bright day ahead of me and dark night behind me. If you fail to do this in time I will have your hands chopped off."

Off went the girl to the lake again, even heavier of

heart than before, wringing her hands and sighing.

"O my white hands, o my quick-fingered hands!" cried she. "I am to part with you tomorrow. Without you I'll not be able to plait my hair or to water flowers."

The laumes heard her sighs, they surrounded the girl and asked her why she was weeping and wringing her hands.

The girl told them of her sorrow, and the laumes combed out her hair, laid her down on a soft bed and lulled her to sleep with their songs.

In the morning when she opened her eyes what did she see but a rich coach standing before her. There were two horses harnessed to it and they were stamping the ground with their golden shoes. The girl felt something in her hand, she opened it, and there in her palm lay an empty nut-shell.

Just then a sun-beam fell on the nut-shell, and at

once the coach and the horses rolled into it!

Overjoyed, the girl rushed to the count. She opened her hand and the coach and horses rolled out of the nut-shell. The count got into the coach and rode off in it, and it was bright day ahead of him and dark night behind him.

Said the count to the girl:

"All this is simple witchcraft. But if you are really clever you will bring me a magic mirror in which I will see both my past and my future."

What was there to be done?

The girl went to the lake again and she wept and sighed as before. The *laumes* heard her, they came sliding over the water as over ice, and, surrounding the girl, began trying to comfort her.

The girl told them of her sorrow and of the count's

whim, and the laumes said:

"It is a difficult task that your master has set us this time. But never you fear. We will fix it so that after this he will stop plaguing you."

The laumes put the girl to sleep, and when she rose in the morning what should she see lying beside her but a beautiful mirror in which the sun and the stars

were reflected in all their brilliance.

The girl took the mirror to the count who stared in

It greedily, and, gluing his nose to it, cried:

"Ha! There's my uncle playing cards with the king and my brother talking to the queen! Why, I can see my whole noble family in this mirror! Now I'd like to see my future."

But no sooner were the words out of his mouth than he saw himself in the mirror hanging from a tree.

So enraged was he by this that he flung the mirror

down on a stone and shattered it to bits.

And from that day on he left the washerwoman in peace and never plagued her any more.





THE SWAN QUEEN

Once upon a time there lived and old man and an old woman. Every morning they went out to clear a nearby forest of dry twigs and leaves, and the moment they left the house a white swan would come flying there. She would fold and put aside her wings, and, turning into a maid, light the stove, cook the dinner, clean and wash everything and then fly away again.

The old people had not a care in the world, for they returned home each day to find everything done for them. But they were filled with wonder as to who their kind helper was.

One day the old man remained home alone. He hid behind a tub and waited to see what would happen. After a time who should come flying into the hut but a swan! She folded her wings, laid them aside, and, turning into a maid, went to the well for water, and the old man at once took the wings and burnt them.

The maid returned with two pailfuls of water, she looked and she saw that her wings were gone! She burst out crying and wept long and bitterly, for this mant that she was parted from her mother and father and her own dear love, too. But there was nothing she could do, so stay she did with the old people.

Now, the king himself was once out hunting near the forest not far from where they lived. He saw the maid and liked her well and he said to the old people:

"I must have the maid for my own. Give her to me and you can have as many pieces of gold as you like."

There was nothing for it and so the old people gave him the maid. The king brought her to his palace and married her and in due time a son was born to them.

One day the queen came out into the garden with her baby son and what did she see but a flock of swans come flying near. At their head flew her father, singing as he flew:

"In that garden bright my daughter I see;
Though she has no wings, yet a swan is she.
Her fingers are covered with golden rings,
To her little son a song she sings,
From a little gold book she reads him a tale,
A kerchief of silk behind her trails.
A pair of white wings to her I'll throw,
And she'll leave her son and with us she'll go!"

The queen's heart grew heavy, the tears poured from her eyes and she sang out in reply:

"Do not throw me the wings, for you come too late— I won't leave my son to an orphan's fate."

Just then the king came up to her.

"Why are your eyes red with weeping?" asked he.

"Our little son cried, and it made me cry, too," the

queen replied.

On the next day her mother flew over her, and, on the days that followed, her brother and her sisters, and they all sang the same song, but the queen refused to heed any of them.

The last to come flying over her was her own dear

love, and he sang as he flew:

"In that garden bright my beloved I see;
Though she has no wings, yet a swan is she.
Her fingers are covered with golden rings,
To her little son a song she sings,
From a little gold book she reads him a tale,
A kerchief of silk behind her trails.
A pair of white wings to her I'll throw,
And her son she'll leave and with me she'll go!"

The queen could contain herself no longer and sang out in reply:

"A pair of wings throw down to me, And with you I'll fly beyond the sea!"

The swan who was her own dear love threw a pair of wings down to her and she left her son and flew away with him. But he met his death soon after and her heart filled with sorrow again.

As for the king her husband, he waited and waited for her, but as she did not come back, married Lauma the Witch.

The stepmother took a dislike to her stepson and treated him badly, but the swan his mother would come flying to the palace at night, fold her wings, wash and fondle her son and then fly away again, singing:

"The king and his wife Repose in their bed; . The palace guards, too, Sleep the sleep of the dead. But all night without fail My son sobs and wails!"

But before flying away she would lull her son to sleep and he would not wake till she came back again.

The king was filled with wonder as to why his son

slept so long.

One night he saw the swan come flying into the palace. She changed into human shape, lulled her son to sleep and then turned back again into a swan and flew away.

The king thought and thought how to keep her with

him but could not think of anything.

Once, there came to the palace an old man, and the king asked him what he was to do in order to catch the swan.

Said the old man:

"Watch and see which of the windows the swan flies out of and put some tar on the sill. Her wings will be glued to it, and if you seize her with your left hand and tear them off with your right hand, she will get back her human shape again." The king did as the old man said. He put some tar on the window-sill, and when the swan's wings were glued to it, seized her with his left hand and tore off her wings with his right hand, and lo!—the swan turned into his own dear queen again.

The king had Lauma the Witch put to death and three days after that he held a great feast to which

came folk from far and near.

I was there, too, and was served mead and ale, but it ran down my beard and not a drop got in my mouth.

A load of firewood I sold, I did; In my new bast shoes the gold coins I hid. I lost them all but you found two or three And if you're a fool you'll return them to me!





THE FOOL WHO BECAME KING

In olden times, in the thick of a dark forest, there lived a man who had three sons. The father loved his two elder sons dearly but could not bear his youngest who was ill treated and called a fool by the whole family. No matter what he said or did, the others only laughed at him and insisted that they had never heard of anything so silly. If the elder brothers took a dislike to a piece of clothing he was made to wear it;

if a dish was not to their liking he was forced to eat it. Whatever they asked for they got, but not so he who was never given anything he wanted. And if ever there was a household chore they hated doing they passed it on to him.

Thus it came about, since the two elder brothers found such work beneath them, that he was the one who had to pasture the pigs. He pastured them day in and day out, and as he had much time for thought began to wonder whether or not there were people living beyond the forest.

One morning he left the pigs to pasture by themselves and set out on his way. He walked for a whole day but there seemed to be no end to the forest. So he ate his breakfast, climbed a tree, and, tying himself to it, spent the night in it.

On the following day he went on again. He walked and he walked, ate his dinner, and toward evening, fearing the wild beasts, climbed a tree and spent the night in it just as he had before.

On the third day on he went again. He followed a path that led through the thickest part of the forest and he had his supper, but the edge of the forest was still not in sight.

Only on the fourth day, as he was sitting in a tree, did he suddenly hear the cocks crowing. He went in the direction from which the crowing came, and, reaching the forest edge at last, saw a city before him.

He came into the city and marvelled at the sight of so many people.

Seeing that many were weeping openly and that the walls of the houses were hung with lengths of black cloth, he asked a passer-by why this was so.

Said the man:

"Where do you come from that you don't know that the wicked dragon is to get the king's daughter tomorrow? Of all the maidens in the city the lot has fallen upon her to be given to him this time. The dragon threatens to level the whole city with the ground if this is not done."

"Why does no one kill the dragon?" the fool asked. "Everyone fears him he is so fierce," the man replied. "The king has promised to give his daughter in marriage and his throne, too, to whoever saves her from the dragon, but even so no one dares to attempt it."

"Well, then, I will!" cried the fool. "Take me to the

king."

When news of this began to get about, everyone thought the young stranger an empty braggart and only the king was pleased that at least one brave man had come forward. He ordered all sorts of weapons to be brought to him, swords, spears, lances, guns and poleaxes, and a choice of helmets and coats of armour, too, but the fool took nothing but a large axe.

"I've never handled any of these fancy weapons before in my life," said he, "but I know how to use an

axe well enough."

On the following day the king took his daughter to the forest, chained her to a tree with iron chains, and, weeping bitterly, returned to the palace. The princess sighed as she waited for death, and the fool stayed with her and watched for the dragon's coming. It was a cold morning, and, thinking to warm himself, he chopped some firewood and made up a fire nearby.

As he was fanning out the flames, the dragon came flying up. He snorted and opened wide his jaws,

wanting to swallow the fool, but as soon as he had crawled up to him the fool snatched up one of the larger of the burning logs and thrust it down his throat. The pain of it made the dragon open his jaws even wider, and the fool availed himself of this and pushed all of the logs down his throat. The dragon roared out in agony and began rolling over the ground. And the fool hurried up with his axe and went at him as if he were a block of wood. He chopped off his head, cut up his tail to bits and would not stop till he was quite worn out himself. The princess saw it all and at first she trembled with fear, but her fear soon changed to joy. And when the fool had cut her chains and freed her, the poor thing who had not thought to remain alive, threw her arms round his neck and kissed him.

Toward evening the king came to the forest and what did he see but the dragon hacked to pieces and the brave young stranger lying asleep, his head resting on the princess's knees. The king embraced him and wept in joy, and from then on no one was there in the whole kingdom who was held in such esteem and regard. So fond did the king grow of the fool that he married him to his daughter and gave up his own throne to him.

After a time the fool bethought him of paying his parents a visit. He took his young wife with him, and off they set in a golden coach. Their way lay through a forest, but they had not quite reached the forest edge when the fool stopped the coach, put on his old clothes and went off to pasture the pigs as he had once done. As for his wife, he told her to ask his parents to let her in for the night, to pretend that she

did not know him and not to be surprised at anything

that might happen.

The princess did as he had told her, and the fool, seeing that the pigs were out by themselves, pastured them till evening and then drove them home, cracking his whip and shouting loudly: "Come on, you porkers! Get a move on, dearies!"

His father ran out to meet him and begged him to

be silent, but he only shouted the louder.

"Do be quiet, the princess is staying in our house," the father said.

But the son, pretending to be the fool they all

thought him, replied:

"What do I care about the princess, I have to drive the pigs home. They've turned wild, what with no one to look after them, and won't listen to me, so I've got to shout at them from time to time."

He came into the hut just as if he had been there only yesterday, and, sitting down at the table, began to eat his supper.

"Where have you been all this time?" his father

asked.

Said the fool in reply:

"I went beyond the forest to see if there were people there and found that there were, indeed, and many more than here. Unlike you, they treated me with kindness and respect, and, to crown all, made me their king."

The father heard him out and only shook his head. He asked him nothing more, for he had had

enough.

In the meantime the mother cooked some supper for the princess but was fearful of serving so high a personage. She asked first one, then the other of her sons to do it, but they, too, dared not.

Said the fool:

"Since no one wants to serve the princess, I will. She won't eat me up. I love her dearly and hope to make her my wife one of these days."

The mother looked at him and shook her head, for was he not the fool he always had been, but she gave

him the food to take to the princess.

The fool carried in the bowl of meat and set it down on the table in front of the princess with such force that—crash!—it broke and the meat fell out.

"Here, lap it up!" said he and ran out again without another word.

The mother had been watching through a crack in the door and seen it all, and when he came back to the kitchen began scolding him for his rudeness.

"Where can a man learn good manners if he is out

with the pigs all day! "said the fool.

"Whether you're out with them or not, nothing will

change you," said the mother with a shrug.

After that he carried in a bowl of soup, and, saying "Here's some soup for you!" set it down on the table with such force that the soup splashed over and wet the princess's figured skirt. The princess only laughed and the fool ran out again.

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself, you pig you!" cried his mother. "You've spoiled the princess's

skirt."

"I don't doubt but she has another," said the fool. Then he carried in a pot of turnips and this he overturned into the princess's lap.

"Here, have some turnips!" said he.

And the princess laughed so that she nearly died.

It was time to go to bed, and the mother said to the fool:

"You'd better find yourself a place to sleep in. Your brothers have taken your bed, so you must go to the cow-house and lie down on the floor there, there's no room for you in the hut."

Said the fool in reply:

"That I won't, for the cow-house is not a fitting place for a king to sleep in. But since there is no

room for me, I'll lie down beside the princess."

"You were always a fool," said the mother, "but you never spoke such nonsense before. The things you think up! As if the princess would let you sleep beside her! Only try it, and she'll send you packing then and there!"

"Just you watch and see how the princess will treat me," the fool said. "She's my wife and is sure to be waiting for me."

At this the fool's mother, father and brothers burst

out laughing.

"Ha-ha-ha!" roared they.

They settled down for the night and the fool went to the princess's room. She welcomed her husband lovingly, as was to be expected, but could not keep from laughing all the same.

The mother and father and the two elder brothers only gasped when the fool came out to them in the morning richly dressed and with his wife at his

side.

They all went off to pay his father-in-law a visit

soon after and they never stopped marvelling that the fool had become king.

I once paid him a visit and stayed in his palace and I came back home on a gingerbread horse he gave me for a gift.

And for all I know, he must still be alive and ruling the land.





THE TWELVE BROTHERS, TWELVE BLACK RAVENS

There was once a lord whose wife died and left him twelve sons and one daughter.

A little time passed by and the lord decided to marry again. His choice fell on a woman who was a witch.

Said she to him:

"If you want me to marry you you must kill your sons, burn their bodies, wrap the ashes in paper and send them to me. But you can spare your daughter." 1

The lord thought this over but as he could not think what to do he told his servant all about it.

Said the servant:

"Do not be grieved. You have many large dogs, so what you must do is burn twelve of them and send their ashes to your future wife. She'll never know. And after you are married, even if she learns the truth nothing will happen to your sons."

And that was just what the lord did. He killed and burnt twelve dogs, put their ashes in a packet, sealed it, and sent it off to the witch.

The witch looked at the ashes, sniffed them and said that she would marry the lord.

After the wedding she came to the lord's house and began to sniff and pry and snoop about. This she did for a long time and then she said:

"Where is this evil smell coming from? Let all who don't belong in the house turn into black ravens and go flying out of here!"

Now, the twelve brothers were hiding in the cellar at the time and at her words they turned into black ravens and flew out of the window.

Only his daughter was left to the lord and she knew nothing about her brothers, for her father forbade his servants to so much as mention them.

One day when she was already twelve years old the servants got to talking among themselves in her presence.

"Did the late mistress have only one child?" asked one.

"Oh, no!" another replied. "She had twelve sons besides, but when the master married again, his wife, witch that she is, put a spell on them and turned them into black ravens."

Hearing about it, the girl at once made ready to set out and seek her brothers. She made twelve shirts and twelve pairs of pants, twelve sheets and twelve pillow-cases, and, tying them into a bundle, set off on her way.

She crossed a field and she passed through a forest and she asked everyone she met if he or she had seen her brothers, the twelve black ravens.

Once, in a dense forest thicket, she came across a hermit.

"Have you seen my brothers, the twelve black ravens?" asked she.

"No," the hermit replied. "But I rule over the heavens, so spend the night in my cabin and in the morning I will command the clouds to come down and ask them about it. They are sure to have seen them!"

On the following morning the hermit ordered all the clouds, white, grey and black, to come down to him, and when they did and had cloaked his cabin it became as dark inside as on the darkest night.

The hermit stepped out on to the threshold.

"Have you seen the Twelve Brothers, Twelve Black Ravens?" asked he.

"No, we haven't," the clouds, white, grey and black, replied, and, rising into the air, they went flying off in different directions.

Said the hermit to the girl:

"If you follow the forest path all day, by evening you will come across my brother. He is lord of all the winds and can ask them if they have seen your brothers."

The girl did as he told her. All day long she followed the path that led through the thickest part of

the forest and by evening came across the second hermit.

Walking up to him, she asked him if he had seen or heard of the Twelve Brothers, Twelve Black Ravens.

"I know nothing about them," the hermit replied. "Spend the night in my cabin and in the morning I will summon all the winds, and if ever they have seen them they will tell you so."

In the morning the hermit began calling the winds together, and lo!—they came flying up, blowing and howling and roaring as they flew. The hermit asked them about the twelve ravens but the winds replied that they had never seen or heard of them.

Said the hermit to the girl:

"If you follow the forest path all day, by evening vou will come across my eldest brother. He is lord of all the birds and perhaps one of them has seen your brothers."

The girl went on.

She followed the forest path all day, and by evening came across the third hermit who said to her just as had the other two before him:

"Spend the night in my cabin, and in the morning I will summon all the birds. If ever they have seen your

brothers they will tell you so."

In the morning the hermit began calling all the birds together, and lo! -there was a great flutter and beating of wings and the birds, big and small, came flying up to him.

The hermit came out to them and asked them about the twelve ravens but the birds replied that they had

neither seen nor heard of them.

The hermit did not try to keep them there, so they soon took wing and flew away again.

All of a sudden as if out of thin air a lame eagle

came flying up.

"Why didn't you make haste and come at my call?" the hermit roared at him. "Where have you been dawdling? "

"A hunter shot and lamed me," the eagle replied. "I

couldn't fly any faster."

"Come, tell me this," the hermit said, "have you seen the Twelve Brothers, Twelve Black Ravens anywhere?"

Said the eagle in reply:

"I have indeed. By day they fly around in the guise of black ravens and toward evening turn into brave and handsome lads and spend the night in a cave on the top of High Mountain."

The hermit went into his cabin and came out again at once, bringing twelve pegs which he gave to the girl. He told her that she was to climb High Mountain and said that as she did so she was to drive the pegs into the ground one by one.

"Take care not to let the pegs slip out of your hands," he warned, "for if you drop even one you'll

never make it to the top."

And to the eagle he said:

"See to it that she doesn't fall and kill herself." Off flew the eagle with the girl on his back and after a time they came to High Mountain, and so high was it that its peak pierced the clouds.

The girl began climbing the mountain and driving the pegs into the ground one after another as she climbed. She had all but reached the top, not half a 19 verst being left to go, when one of the pegs suddenly slipped out of her hands. Seeing it drop, she stumbled and would have fallen had not the eagle who had been waiting for her on the mountain top caught her up. With the claws of his good leg he seized her by the bundle she was clutching and carried her off beyond the clouds. Carrying her up to a large cave, he let her down by the entrance and said:

"Your brothers come to this cave every evening. Go inside and you will see twelve beds. Spread your sheets on the beds and slip your pillow-cases on the pillows and put a shirt and a pair of pants on each bed. There is a bedstand with a loaf of bread on it beside each bed and you must cut off a slice from each loaf and eat it. The bed closest to the door belongs to your youngest brother. Crawl under it and spend the night there."

With this the eagle flew away and the girl came into the cave. Everything in it was just as the eagle had told her. So she spread her sheets on the beds, slipped her pillow-cases on the pillows and put a shirt and a pair of pants on each bed. After that she cut a slice from each of the loaves and ate it and then crawled under her youngest brother's bed.

Evening had only just set in when she heard the ravens cawing. Down they dropped to the ground, turned into brave and handsome lads and came into the cave.

Seeing the beds made ready for the night and the shirts and pants lying there, they were overjoyed. They hastened to put on the new clothes and were about to sit down to their evening meal when they saw that a slice had been cut from each loaf.

Said the oldest of the brothers:

"It's good that the beds have been made and the clothes prepared for us but it is not so good that some of our bread is missing. Oh, well, there is nothing to be done, we have to make the best of it! "

The brothers went to bed, and in the morning as soon as they awoke turned into black ravens and flew

away, cawing loudly.

The girl crawled out from her hiding-place, made up the beds, swept the floor, tidied up the cave and sat down to wait for her brothers. When evening came she again cut a slice from each loaf, ate it and crawled under the youngest brother's bed.

Soon she heard the ravens cawing and the next

moment her brothers came into the cave.

Said the oldest of the brothers:

"Look, brothers, more of our bread has been eaten! Perhaps someone who means to harm us has found his way here. I am not going to do anything about it today but if the same thing happens again tomorrow, then I'll turn the whole mountain inside out but find the maldoer."

The girl was frightened and began thinking what she should do.

Her brothers had been snoring away for a long time, but, hard as she tried, she could not get to sleep. She fought with herself for a time, but at last, unable to bear it longer, tugged at her youngest brother's shirt sleeve.

"Who is there?" cried he, starting a wake.

And the girl whispered back:

"I am your little sister, my brother. I have made my way here and found you, but our eldest brother. 19 is in such a terrible temper that I don't know what to do." Said the youngest brother:

"Go to sleep, and we'll see what we must do tomor-

row. Morning is wiser than evening."

In the morning the brothers rose and were about to go out when the youngest brother said to the eldest:

"You said you would turn the mountain inside out to find the one who eats up our bread. But if he should turn out to be someone close to us, someone like our little sister—what then?"

Said the oldest brother:

"I see that you know who is hiding here. So out with it, brother, and tell us who it is!"

After that there was nothing more to be said, so the

youngest brother called:

"Come, little sister, let whatever is to be be. Climb out from under the bed and show yourself!"

The girl did as he told her and climbed out from under the bed.

Said the oldest of the brothers:

"Had you waited for us at home for another year, sister, we'd have come back to you. But now we will be parted for twelve years more and will only meet again if you chain your tongue and don't utter a word in all the twelve years."

And telling her to get on his back, he turned into a black raven, and his brothers with him, and off they flew!

They took the girl to a dense forest, put her on the top of a tall spruce-tree and bade her goodbye.

A long time passed, the clothes the girl had on tore to shreds and fell about her, and still she sat there and never stirred.

One day a prince and a group of huntsmen came to the forest on horseback. One of the dogs they had with them stopped by the tree in which sat the girl and began barking loudly. The prince and the huntsmen came galloping up and at once saw that someone was hiding in the tree. But though they called to him and asked who he was, he made no answer and stayed very still.

Said the prince to his servant:

"Climb the tree and get him down here and then we'll see who it is!"

The servant began climbing the tree, but, seeing him, the girl glanced out and showed with a gesture that she had no clothes on. The servant then jumped down to the ground and told the prince that a pretty lass was sitting in the top of the tree but that she was quite naked.

The prince gave the servant some clothes and these the servant passed on to the girl who dressed herself and then climbed down from the tree. The prince was smitten at sight of her. He brought the girl home and told his parents that he wanted to marry her.

The king and queen were loath to let the prince marry a mute, but the prince pleaded so hard that they finally gave their consent. And so it came about that the prince and the sister of the Twelve Brothers, Twelve Black Rayens were married.

Several years went by and a son was born to them. On that day the prince was away from home and his young wife was put in the care of her stepmother the witch. The witch threw the newborn baby away, put a pup in its place, and, showing it to all the courtiers, said:

"Just see what her child is like!"

The king and queen were horrified and wrote to their son, telling him to come back at once and drive out his wife.

The prince came back, he looked at his wife and so sweet and beautiful did he think her that he refused to

punish her.

On the following year a second son was born to them, and the prince being away again, his wife's stepmother the witch threw out this baby, too, put a kitten in its place, and, showing it to all the courtiers, said:

"Just see what she has given birth to!"

The king and queen were very angry and they wrote to their son who wrote back telling them to do nothing until his return.

The prince came back, and, seeing his wife, said:

"Mine is a good and a kind wife and I will not part

with her. Let us wait and see what happens."

Another year went by, and the prince was away again when his wife gave birth to their third son. The witch threw him away, too, and showed everyone appup, saying that that was what the princess had given birth to. The king and queen wrote to their son asking him to return in all haste and decide what to do.

The prince came back and he was sorry for his wife

but could think of no way of saving her.

"Do as you think fit!" said he to his parents.

The princess was tried and the judges said that she was a witch and condemned her to the stake.

A big fire was made up and the princess was led to it but all of a sudden it began to rain and the fire went out.

The king then ordered dry brushwood to be brought that the fire might be started anew.

Now, it was at that very moment that the twelve years since the girl had parted from her brothers the twelve black ravens were up. The fire had just been started when lo!—they came flying up and dropping to the ground one after another. The oldest of them turned into a brave and handsome man, and he came towards the people gathered near the stake, leading a three-year-old boy by the hand. The second turned

into a brave and handsome man, and he came up

leading a two-year-old boy by the hand. And behind them came the third brother carrying in his arms a newborn infant swathed in swaddling clothes.

All three came up to the fire and cried:

"What are you doing? Why would you put to death our own dear sister who has done nothing to deserve

it? Better burn our stepmother the witch! "

And they explained that the witch had thrown out the newborn babies and that they had taken them away and brought them up. The princess, too, spoke up, saying that it was because of the love she bore her brothers that she had been silent for so many years.

At this all who were there rushed at the witch and

cast her in the flames.

The king held a sumptuous feast to which he invited great numbers of people from far and near. I was there, too, and there was much that I saw and much that I had to eat and drink, but it all ran down my beard and not a drop got in my mouth.



THE FOOL WHO PASTURED A HUNDRED RABBITS

In olden times there lived a king who had one daughter, and he said that he would only let her marry a man who was able to carry out three tasks set by himself even if that man should be the last beggar in the kingdom. Many tried but not one was lucky enough to carry out these tasks.

Not far off there lived a man of common birth who had three sons.

"I think I'll go and try to win the princess for myself," said the oldest and cleverest of the three, and off he went.

On the way he met an old man, a beggar, but did not so much as say "good morning" to him.

"Where are you going in such haste?" the beggar asked.

"It's none of your business!" the oldest son muttered and went on without stopping.

"Good fortune will not smile on you, my lad!" said the old man.

And so it came about, for the oldest and cleverest of the sons returned home empty-handed.

The second son, who was a clever enough young man, too, and very sure that he would win the princess for himself, tried his luck next but with no better result.

Said the third and most foolish of the three sons: "The older two tried their luck, so why shouldn't I! Perhaps I will be more fortunate."

"You fool!" said his father. "To try to do what your clever brothers could not do!"

But the fool would not listen and went off to see the king.

He met the old beggar on the way, and, taking off his hat, bowed and greeted him with all the respect and politeness due him.

The old man thanked the fool and asked him where he was going, and the fool told him all about it and did not hide anything.

Said the old man:

"Here is a whistle for you. You will be sent to pasture a hundred rabbits today and that is when you 1

must blow on it so that they all come running back to you."

The fool came to the palace and was ushered into

the king's presence.

"Where is your daughter?" asked he. "I would like to take a look at her and see if she is comely enough for me."

The princess was sent for, and when he saw her the fool said:

"A comely maid indeed! I like her well and in order to win her for myself will carry out the three tasks you set me."

On the first day the king told the fool to pasture a hundred rabbits. The fool took them to the field and set them free and off they ran in all directions and were gone from sight. The fool now wanted to see if what the beggar had told him were true and if the rabbits would listen to him. He blew on his whistle, and lo!—there they were, the whole hundred of them. He counted them and found that not one was missing.

"Well, now you may run where you please and pick the grass, and when I need you I'll whistle," said he.

Someone saw it all and told the king, and the king sent his wife to the fool for her to get him to give her one of the rabbits.

The queen dressed herself in the garb of an old peasant woman, and, hobbling slowly up to the fool, asked him if he would not let her have one of his rabbits, for, said she, she needed it badly.

"I can neither sell any of the rabbits nor let anyone have one for a gift, for they do not belong to me," the fool told her. But the queen would not let him alone and kept badgering him to let her have one rabbit, just one!

Guessing who she was, the fool said that, yes, he might consider doing as she asked but only if she agreed to give him a kiss first. The queen tried to talk him out of it, but, seeing that she could not have it her way otherwise, gave him a hearty smack! Then she thrust the rabbit he gave her in a basket and went home, beside herself with joy at having, as she thought, twisted the fool round her little finger.

The fool waited till she was close to the palace and then he pulled out his whistle and blew on it. And the same moment—rap-tap!—the rabbit pushed open the basket top with his head, jumped out and flew like an arrow to the fool's side. As for the queen, she stood there and looked blank, for the rabbit was gone!

In the evening the fool brought in all the hundred rabbits. He delivered them to the king, and the king told him to come to see him in the morning.

The next day, as he was on his way to the palace, the fool met the old beggar again who gave him a trumpet and said that this was to call in horses with.

That day the king ordered the fool to take a hundred horses to pasture and to drive them all back

into the stable again by evening.

The fool let the horses loose in the field and off they ran in all directions and were gone from sight. An hour went by and the fool decided to get them together again. He blew on the trumpet, and lo!—the horses came running, the whole hundred of them, and stood round him in a circle.

The king tried to get the queen to go and coax the fool to give her a horse but she would not, saying that

horses kicked, that she was afraid of them and that he could very well go himself!

The king disguised himself so that it was hard to tell who he was, got on a donkey's back and, riding out to the pasture, asked the fool to sell him a horse.

"I have none that I can sell," said the fool.

"Well, can you lend me one for a time?"

"No, I can't."

"Then, perhaps, you can give me one for a present?"
"Oh, very well, I will, only first you must lift up
your donkey's tail and hold it like that for a while."

The king tried to get out of it, but as nothing helped and he wanted the horse very badly, he lifted the donkey's tail and held it as he had been told. The fool gave him the horse, and the king climbed on its back, rode home on it and locked it up in the stable. And he was very pleased with himself, thinking: "I tricked the fool today all right, one horse will be missing by evening."

As for the fool, he did not know that the king had long been home and the horse locked up in the stable for near an hour, so he up and blew on his trumpet! The horse heard him and—crash!—it struck at the door which flew off its hinges. The king heard the crash and rushed to the window but all he saw was the tip of the horse's tail.

In the evening the fool drove in all the hundred horses and locked them up in the stable.

On the third day the king gave the fool a sack and ordered him to fill it with lies and not stop till he himself told him to tie it up.

The fool thrust his head into the sack and began talking nonsense and spinning all sorts of lies.

But words are not chaff, so talk ten to a dozen as

he might, the sack remained empty.

The fool then bethought him of filling the sack with truth, and he began telling about how he had been out pasturing the rabbits and the queen had come to buy one of them and about how he had only let her have one in return for a kiss. The king nearly fell off his feet laughing when he heard this.

Then the fool went on to tell about how he had been out pasturing horses and the king himself had come to beg him for one and how he had refused to let him have it till he had held up the donkey's—

"Tie the sack, will you, it's top full!" cried the king, stopping the fool before he could utter the word

"tail".

And so that was how the fool got his way and married the princess.





SPRUCE, QUEEN OF THE GRASS SNAKES

Long, long ago, in times gone by, there lived an old man and an old woman. They had twelve sons and three daughters the youngest of whom was called Spruce.

One summer evening the sisters went for a bathe. They swam and splashed about, and, having had their fill of it, climbed out on shore and reached for their clothes. Spruce looked, and there, coiled up in the

sleeve of her shift, she saw a grass snake! What was she to do? Her older sister snatched up a stake in order to chase it out but the grass snake turned to Spruce and said in a human voice:

"Spruce, my dear, promise to marry me and then

I'll crawl out myself."

Now, this only made the tears well up in Spruce's eyes, for how could she marry a snake, so she cried angrily:

"Give me back my shift without more ado and yourself crawl off to wherever it is you came from!"

But the grass snake stayed where he was and said as before:

"Promise to marry me and I'll crawl out."

Not knowing what to do, Spruce said that she would, and the grass snake at once crawled out of her shift and away.

Before three days had passed a great number of grass snakes came crawling into the old people's front yard, frightening everyone half out of their wits. They forced their way into the hut, and, approaching Spruce and her mother and father, said that they had come a'matchmaking.

At first the two old people were angered and amazed and would not hear of such a thing, but, learning that Spruce had given her word and being faced with such a vast number of snakes, they were much troubled. Whether they wanted to or not, the youngest and prettiest of their daughters would be marrying a grass snake and there was little they could do about it.

However, they would not give their consent to the match all at once. They asked the matchmakers to

wait in the hut and themselves stole off quietly to an old neighbour of theirs and told her all about it.

Said the neighbour:

"It's easy to fool the grass snakes, for they are trusting and good-natured. Dress up a goose in a bride's clothes and give it to the matchmakers instead of your daughter."

And that was just what they did. They dressed up a white goose in a bride's clothes, but no sooner had the matchmakers gone off with it than a cuckoo-bird sitting in a birch-tree called out after them:

"Cuckoo! Cuckoo! You've been betrayed. It's a goose you got Instead of a maid."

The grass snakes flew into a rage, they threw out the goose, came back and demanded to be given the true bride. And Spruce's parents, at their old neighbour's advice, dressed a white ewe in bridal clothes and gave it to them.

But as the grass snakes started on their way the cuckoo-bird called out again:

"Cuckoo! Cuckoo! They've tricked you anew. Instead of a maid You've been given a ewe!"

The grass snakes turned back, hissing with rage, and demanded to be given the true bride.

They were given a white calf this time, but the cuckoo-bird having warned them again, came back angrier than ever and threatened Spruce's parents

with droughts and floods and hunger if they failed to keep their word.

Her mother and father and her sisters and brothers wept over Spruce but as there was nothing to be done they dressed her up in bridal clothes and gave her to the grass snakes. Off went Spruce with the grass snakes, and the cuckoo-bird called out:

> "Make haste and get home Where you grass snakes belong: For his bride has the groom Been kept waiting too long."

On went Spruce and her escorts and at last they came to the shore of the sea. There a handsome youth met them and told Spruce that he was the very same grass snake that she had found in the sleeve of her shift.

They made off at once for the nearest island and descended to the bottom of the sea where stood a rich palace. It was there they were married and held their wedding, and they drank and feasted and danced for three whole weeks.

The palace was filled with many lovely things and Spruce felt gay and happy there. A peace descended on her heart and as the days went by she forgot her parents and her old home.

Nine years passed, and Spruce now had four children—three sons, Oak, Ash and Birch, and a daughter, the youngest of the four, whom she named Little Aspen.

One day Spruce's oldest son, who had been running about and playing pranks, began asking his mother where her parents were.

"Where do they live, mother?" asked he. "I would so like to pay them a visit!"

It was only then that Spruce remembered her mother and father and her whole family and set to wondering how they were and whether they were alive or not. She was filled with a great longing to see them and told her husband so.

At first Grass Snake would not hear of it, but she begged him again and again and he finally agreed to let her go.

"Only you must make me some yarn out of this tow first," said he, and, giving her some silky tow, pointed at the spinning-wheel.

Spruce set to work, she spun day and night, but the bundle of tow grew no smaller. It came to her then that Grass Snake was trying to trick her, that the tow was magic tow and that she could spin no yarn out of it no matter how hard she tried.

So off she went to see an old woman, a sorceress, who lived close by.

Said she to her in pleading tones:

"Please, mother, please, my dear, show me how to spin this tow."

"You must light the stove and throw the tow in the fire," the old woman told her. "You will never be able to do anything with it otherwise."

Spruce came home, and, lighting the stove as if to bake some bread, threw the tow in the fire. It flared up and she saw a toad the size of a large battledore jumping about in the flames, a silky thread running out of its fiery mouth.

The fire died and the toad vanished, but the silvery yarn remained.

Spruce hid the yarn and again asked her husband to let her go for a few days to visit her parents.

This time Grass Snake dragged a pair of iron shoes from under the bench.

"You can go as soon as you wear these out," said he.

Spruce put on the shoes and began walking and stamping about in them and trying to break them on some sharp stones. But the shoes were thick and strong, and, try hard as she would, she could not wear them out. In fact, there was no wearing them out at all, she now saw, they would last her all her life long.

So off Spruce went to ask the old sorceress for her

counsel again.

"Take the shoes to a blacksmith, let him put them in a forge and heat them to white heat," said the old woman.

Spruce did as she was told, and once the shoes were burnt through, she wore them out in three days and again began pleading with her husband to let her go to see her parents.

"Very well," said he. "Only bake a pie first, for it is not meet to go visiting anyone without taking them

something good to eat for a present."

But he had all the dishes in the palace put away that there might be none left for Spruce to mix the dough in.

Spruce cudgeled her brains for a long time trying to think how to bring water from a well without a pail and how to mix dough without a trough, but as there was nothing she could think of she went to see the old woman again.

Said the old woman:

"Do not try to draw water from a well but take a sieve, stop up the holes with leaven and use it to scoop up some water from a stream. Mix the dough in the same sieve."

Spruce did as she was told. She mixed the dough, baked some pies and prepared to set off with her children. Grass Snake saw them off, he brought them out on to the shore and said:

"Do not spend more than nine days in your parents' house but return on the tenth. Come out on to the shore with only the children and no one else and call to me thus:

'If alive you are, my husband, White the foam will be and milky. If 'tis dead you are, beloved, Red the foam will be and bloody.'

If the sea boils up and the foam is milk-white, you will know that I am alive; if it boils up and the foam is blood-red, then you will know that I am no more. As for you, children, mind that you tell no one what you have just heard."

Having said this, he bade them goodbye and wished them a happy return.

There was no end to the rejoicing when Spruce appeared in her parents' house. All her kinsfolk and their neighbours, too, came to have a look at her and everyone wanted to know if she was happy with Grass Snake. She was kept busy answering their questions and telling them about her life, and they vied with each other in speaking kindly to her and in treating her to the best they had in the way of food and drink.

Spruce did not notice how the days flew.

In the meantime her parents and her twelve brothers and sisters were racking their brains, trying to think how to keep Spruce with them and not let her go back to Grass Snake. At last they decided to worm out of her children how Spruce was to call him up from the bottom of the sea, for then they could go there, lure him up out of the depths and kill him.

Her brothers took Oak, Spruce's oldest son, to the forest, stood round him in a circle and began questioning him. But the boy pretended that he knew nothing, and threaten him as they would, they could get nothing out of him. They let him go then but told him not to say a word about it to his mother.

On the next day they took Ash to the forest and questioned him, and on the day after that, Birch, but learnt nothing from either of them.

At last they led the youngest of Spruce's children, Little Aspen, to the forest. At first she, too, said that she knew nothing, but when they threatened to thrash her she blurted out the secret.

Then Spruce's twelve brothers took their sharp scythes, went to the shore of the sea and called out:

"If alive you are, my husband, White the foam will be and milky. If 'tis dead you are, beloved, Red the foam will be and bloody."

Hearing them, Grass Snake swam up from the sea, and the twelve brothers fell on him and slashed him to death with their scythes. After that they came back home but they said not a word about what had happened to Spruce.

Nine days passed and it was time for Spruce to leave. She bade all her kin goodbye, and, going with her children to the shore of the sea, called out:

"If alive you are, my husband, White the foam will be and milky. If 'tis dead you are, beloved, Red the foam will be and bloody."

At this the sea darkened and boiled up with a roar, and Spruce looked and saw that the foam cresting the waves was blood-red. Suddenly what did she hear but her husband's voice saying to her:

"It was your twelve brothers that slashed me to death with their scythes, and it was Little Aspen, our

little daughter, who betrayed me."

Spruce was filled with grief and horror. The tears rolled from her eyes, and, turning to cowardly Little Aspen, she spoke these words:

"Be a tree, a fearful tree and timid, Ne'er know peace of heart but tremble always. Let the rain torment you without mercy, Let the wind pull madly at your tresses."

Then, addressing her brave and faithful sons, she said:

"You will grow to be great trees and handsome, With the Spruce your mother always near you."

And as she said so it was.

Oak, Ash and Birch grew up to be tall and mighty trees and so they remain to this day, but Aspen trembles at the touch of the lightest breeze and all because she was once so frightened of her uncles that she betrayed her own father.



THE GREATEST LOAFER OF THEM ALL

Once there lived a king whose only daughter, though fair and of a marriageable age, was still husbandless and in danger of remaining an old maid. Many suitors, rich and not so rich, brave and not so brave, learned men and fools, came to plead for the princess's hand but not one could please the king. A strange man was this king: in winter he rode about in a cart and in summer, in a sledge; he wore his clothes

back to front, walked backward instead of forward, and his beard, so they said, grew not on his chin but on his forehead.

Now, the king had envoys sent out far and wide to seek a husband for his daughter, saying that he would only give her in marriage and leave his kingdom, too, to the laziest man that could be found.

Three years passed, and the first envoy came back. The king sat there taking snuff and stroking the beard on his forehead and he asked the envoy what he had seen and what he had heard.

"I have walked the length and breadth of many a land and seen many cities and many people, too, Your Majesty," said the envoy, "but nowhere did I meet anyone so lazy as Stepas Dilde."

"Who is this Stepas Dilde? Tell me about him!" said the king sternly. For, you see, he was a true king, and

kings are wont to be stern.

"He is a most remarkable man, Your Majesty. I met him by the wayside, and he had one leg stuck in a pool of mud and the other raised over a bridge. I asked him what he was waiting for and he said in reply that he had been standing like that for over two months because he was too lazy to pull his leg out of the mud."

"A true loafer!" the king agreed, and he gestured to his scribes to jot down the man's name in their books.

In the meantime the second envoy had also returned.

"I have crossed many mountains and rivers during my travels, Your Majesty," said he, "and met many people, but I particularly remember one of them, a man so lazy that I am sure you will find no one more suitable to be your son-in-law."

"Tell me about him!" said the king, sneezing loudly. "Well, Your Majesty, he lives in a village and has grown himself such a long beard and whiskers that they have cloaked the whole village like rain clouds. In one of his whiskers a stork has made a nest and in the other, a family of ants have built a huge ant-hill. I asked him why he had let his whiskers and beard grow to such a length but he was too lazy to reply. Nearby lay a rusty razor which he has never touched. The people there told me that he has not shaved for twenty-four years."

"A droll fellow!" said the king, and asked after some hesitation: "Does he ever scratch his beard or is

he too lazy to do even that much?"

"No, he's not, Your Majesty," the envoy replied. "All he does is scratch. Also, now and again he picks up a pebble and flings it at the crows who like to perch on his whiskers."

The king smiled and waved his hand, bidding his scribes put down in their books the second envoy's

story.

Meanwhile the third envoy had arrived and was awaiting his turn in the toyal anteroom. He was ushered into the king's presence, and, after bowing to

the king and lauding his wisdom, said:

"I have seen so many interesting things during my travels, Your Majesty, that it would be enough to fill ten books and more. But nothing and no one struck me so much as a man I met, a loafer who hasn't his equal on earth and who, I feel sure, is truly worthy of becoming your son-in-law."

"Out with it, then, and tell us about him!" said the

king, brightening.

"So lazy is this man, Your Majesty, that he has not been out of his house in fourteen years. All he does is sit at the table and offer advice to his family. Once, just as I had arrived, his house caught fire but he did not so much as stir. His clothes began to smoulder and his moustache and beard to burn and still he kept hoping that the fire would die out of itself. In the end, they dragged him out from the table by force. A good thing, too, or he would have burnt to death like a rat!"

"A rare case. Let him be crowned with the Wreath of the Grand Loafer!" the king exclaimed, and, hearing that the fourth envoy had returned, bade his servants show him in.

Having prostrated himself before the king and kissed the hem of his long mantle, the fourth envoy

wiped his face and proceeded to tell his story.

"O Your Royal Majesty, O Wisdom and Goodness!" he began. "You can put me in fetters and let me be torn by wild beasts if you have heard anything to equal that which I am about to tell you. I crossed many seas and traversed many mountains during my travels and I saw just about everything there is to see, but nothing and no one left me so shaken as the great loafer of the Land of Idlers."

"What is he famed for?" asked the king, winding

one of his long red whiskers round his finger.

"For lying under the same tree in his kitchen garden for sixteen years and watching for a turnip or carrot to grow up in front of his nose. All about him and even on his nose and forehead little yellow turnips have sprung up, but, being too lazy to move a finger, he never touches them. He eats nothing except for an apple or a plum that happens to drop in his mouth and is as thin and dry as a lath."

"Does that kind of life please him?" asked the king.

"Very much, Your Majesty! I had a long talk with him and it seems he has a sweet tooth. He kept saying how much he'd have liked an apple or a pear to grow up under his nose or, better still, in his mouth."

"A rare loafer, indeed!" agreed the king. "And a learned and patient one as well. I wonder what my

last envoy will have to tell me."

The king had just gestured to his scribes to put down the fourth envoy's story when the fifth envoy burst into the throne-room.

"You look excited, my man," said the king. "I suppose you have seen many wonders. Come, then,

tell us about them! "

"O great and mighty king!" the man began. "I have seen what your other envoys have seen but I doubt that they have seen what it has fallen to my lot to see. After three years of travels and adventures and many narrow escapes from death, I arrived in a certain land and there learned of the existence of a loafer like no other. Some think him dead, some, living, some believe him to be a saint and some don't know what to believe. I have seen this loafer with my own eyes. He sits on a hillock, and swallows nest under his chin and behind his ears. He has not stirred for seventy years. He has stopped up his ears with wax, for he is too lazy to use them, and has thrust out his tongue and tied a large stone to its tip because he is too lazy to talk. He eats nothing at all and lives on air, for he is

too lazy to stretch out his hand for the food even when it is brought him. About ten years ago he was seen to move his lips and that was when those around him decided that he was alive."

"The very man to be my son-in-law!" cried the king, and, rewarding his envoys, especially the last one, richly, he ordered the wedding to be held without delay and the guests invited, and himself set out in his best cart to fetch the greatest loafer of them all.

The loafer married the princess and, in due time, became king. They say that he made a most excellent king, for after a few years of his reign his subjects turned into even greater loafers than he was himself.





A LORD'S PROMISES

In a certain land there lived a lord who was a cheat and a swindler. He was always tricking his workmen and robbing them, and to one of them, a cheerful, highspirited youth, he had not paid his wages for three years on end.

Now, this young workman was walking along the river bank one day when he met a man coming toward him.

"Where are you coming from?" asked the workman.

"From where the road takes its beginning."

"Have you seen the floating stone?"

"I have. It drifts along and never sinks and neither

do the millstones lying on top of it."

"Good! I can see you're a bright lad, so let's be friends. You and I will go to that devil of a lord of mine together. I'll go in first and you stand outside and listen to what he and I talk about. Then you'll know what to say to him later."

Back went the workman to the lord's house.

"You haven't paid me my wages for three years, Your Honour," said he to the lord. "Can't you give me some beer at least?"

"I have no beer," the lord replied. "There's been a

poor crop of barley this year."

This did not daunt the workman who knew how

stingy and stupid was the lord.

"I recently paid a visit to my kinsmen who work on one of the estates near here," said he, "and the barley they grow is really something! Why, they make twelve barrels of beer out of one ear."

"It can't be!" the lord cried. "I'll send one of my

servants to see if it's true or not."

Off went the servant to do the lord's bidding, and the first person he met was the workman's new friend.

"Where do you come from, my good man?" asked he.

"The very place you're bound for."

"Had they a good crop of barley this year?"

"I don't know, for I wasn't there when they were making beer. I did see them cutting the barley,

though. Ten men were at it for three days and it was axes they were using."

The servant gave the man ten copper pieces and asked him to come with him to the lord and tell him all about it.

The man agreed and they went back together.

"Is it true about the barley?" asked the lord of the servant.

"It is indeed, sir. I've even brought someone with me who'll bear me out."

The lord was in a fix and he knew it. Wanting to be rid of his unbidden visitors as quickly as possible he said to the workman:

"Come in a year. I will pay what is owing you in

cabbage."

The workman went away, but when the year was up he dressed his friend in a woman's clothes and went with him to see the lord, himself walking in front and his friend dragging along behind him.

"I've come to get my cabbage, Your Honour," said

he to the lord.

"I have no cabbage, we've had a poor crop of it this year," the lord replied, spreading out his hands.

"Well, in the place I've just been to the lord had such a rich crop of it that they shredded twelve barrels full out of a single head."

"It can't be!" cried the lord. "I'll send one of my

servants to see if it's true or not."

Off went the servant and he met the workman's friend dressed up as a woman.

"Where do you come from?" the servant asked.

"The place you are bound for."

"Had they a good cabbage crop this year?"

"I don't know, for I wasn't there when they were salting the cabbage. But I did see that they were using twelve horses to cart one cabbage stump."

"What did they want it for?"

"To make a bridge. It was just big enough to span a river."

Said the servant:

"Here is ten copper pieces for you for making my way shorter. Come with me to my lord and tell him all about it."

Back came the servant to the lord's house.

"Is it true that they had as rich a crop of cabbage as the workman said?" the lord asked him.

"It is indeed, sir. I have brought a woman with me who comes from there and she will bear me out."

The lord turned to the workman.

"All right, then," said he. "Come back next year and perhaps the hens will be laying well. Then I'll be able to pay what is owing you in eggs."

The workman went away, and he and his friend passed

the year any which way and had a hard time of it.

When spring came round they went to see the lord again, the workman walking in front and his friend, a beard pasted to his chin, following.

"How are your hens laying, Your Honour?"

"Badly, very badly. In fact, they haven't laid a single egg. There was nothing to feed them with."

"Well, I'm just back from a place where they feed

hens with stars."

"It can't be!" cried the lord. "I'll send my servant to see."

Off went the servant, and the first person he met was the workman's bearded friend.

"Where do you come from?" asked he.

"The place you are bound for."

"Have you seen anyone there feeding hens with stars?"

"No. But I did see three men rolling one egg on to a

frying pan."

The servant gave the bearded man ten copper pieces and bade him repeat what he had just said to the lord.

Back came the servant to the lord's house.

"Is it true about the hens?" asked the lord.

"Indeed it is, sir! They feed the hens with stars and the hens lay eggs so large that it is all three men can do to lift one egg. I have brought a man with me from those parts and he'll bear me out."

The lord saw that he would be hard put to it to get

rid of his workman.

"Come back in a year," said he, "and tell me of the greatest fool you will have seen. Then I'll pay what is owing you."

Off went the workman, he spent the year any which

way and then came back again to see the lord.

"Well, what have you seen that you would like me

to hear about?" asked the lord.

"I have been travelling the year round and I have seen many strange and wonderful things. In one place I went to I saw a man sitting on the edge of a forest and that is what he had been doing for ten years. His beard was so long that it stretched over the ground and there were swallows nesting under it and also behind his ears. A crowd of people milled round him and they were all filled with wonder to see anyone so foolish."

"Why does he sit there?"

"He wants his lord to take pity on him. The poor man hasn't been paid his wages in ten years."

"Why do people think this man a fool?"

"Because he hasn't lost hope that a lord will treat a man justly."

At this, the lord, who understood very well what his workman was hinting at, bade his servants drive him out from his house and land.

A lord's promises are empty promises.

To expect justice from a lord is as to expect a litter in a cow-house to be downy and soft.





STRAKALAS AND MAKALAS

Strakalas and Makalas were neighbours. They got on well together and were friends from their earliest years. If one of them killed a pig or celebrated a christening he never forgot to invite the other. It was with good reason that the villagers said that if Strakalas were made king, Makalas would be sure to share his throne.

But what was bad was that the two friends were as 22

stubborn as mules and rare braggarts to boot! Should Strakalas, without stopping to think, remark that in America cows had wings and flew like birds he'd never go back on it, no matter what you did, but keep repeating it till doomsday. And should Makalas declare that in Turkey drills and hammers grew in the fields he'd insist it was so even if you threatened to kill him for it.

One day Strakalas and Makalas set off for the

forest to chop some firewood.

They went a little way and Makalas said: "I see you have a new axe, neighbour."

"That's so!" Strakalas replied. "And the like of it has never been seen here before. Not only will it cut

bread but split stones as well."

"Catch me believing that!" said Makalas. "And, anyway, there's no better axe than mine. Old as it is, no other even if it's brand-new can compare with it. Just pass a whetstone over it once and you can shave with it! "

"Well, I don't need a whetstone or anything else to sharpen my axe. All I need do is blow on it once and then again, and it's ready for use! "Strakalas returned.

"One touch of my axe is enough to bring down a

tree! " bragged Makalas.

"It's no match for mine, all the same," Strakalas said, holding his ground. "Why, only yesterday I came out to chop some trees for firewood, I raised my axe, and crash! -a birch split in two."

Lauding their axes in this way, the two friends came up to a farm with young apple-trees growing just beside the road. Without himself noticing it, Makalas flourished his axe and brought down one of

the trees.

"See? What did I tell you!" he cried. "All I did was raise my axe and down came the tree."

At this, Strakalas, too, waved his axe and brought

down two apple-trees.

"There you are—two trees felled at a stroke!" said he.

But now the owner of the orchard and his sons came running out of the house. They took away their axes from Strakalas and Makalas and beat them to within an inch of their lives.

Autumn came. Strakalas and Makalas cleaned their guns and went hunting. They had only just set out when Strakalas said:

"Let's go after a bear, neighbour! We could kill one

easily."

"One? Humph! We could kill five!" Makalas returned. "I remember in my young years I had only to go out for an hour to come back with a dozen rabbits."

"Well, when I was young," Strakalas put in, not to be outdone, "I'd shoot so many rabbits every time I went hunting that I had to hire a cart to bring them all home."

"Two carts were never enough for all the game I used to bring down," Makalas came back, piling it on. "I'd take only the fattest of the lot and leave the rest, anything from two to three hundred rabbits or birds or whatever, to the crows."

"I once killed fourteen ducks in a swamp with one

grain of small shot! "Strakalas declared.

"Is that all?" Makalas rejoined, not in the least put out. "Do you know what happened to me once? I ran out of all my small shot, so I used a horseshoe nail instead, fired my gun once, and—presto!—killed two rabbits on the spot and nailed a fox's tail to a tree at the same time."

"That's nothing!" said Strakalas, waving him disdainfully away. "Just last year I loaded my gun with pepper, bay leaves and salt and downed seven ducks at a single shot, and, what's more, all of them were already plucked, salted and peppered."

"Such things more befit a cook than a hunter, let me tell you, neighbour," said Makalas. "What a true hunter needs first and foremost is a keen eye. Now, I could hit a hat on a man's head from a mile away."

"Since you mention it, I could do that with my eyes shut. If you are as good a shot as you say, let's see you hit a button."

"What's a button!" said Makalas. "I wouldn't miss a fly at that distance."

Boasting loudly, the two came up to a farmhouse. In the front yard, pillows and clothing had been hung on a line for airing.

Strakalas pulled down his gun, took careful aim and hit a sheepskin.

"See that?" he cried.

Makalas followed suit. His bullet passed through a pillow.

"I said I could hit a fly!" he shouted.

Hearing the shots, the farmer and his friends came running. Seeing what Strakalas and Makalas had done, they snatched up one a log, another, a stick, and went after them. Catching them, they took away their guns and, in addition, thrashed them to within an inch of their lives.

Summer came, and Makalas went out into the field to cut the rye. He was hard at it when Strakalas

appeared as if out of thin air.

"What's your hurry, neighbour?" asked he. "Let the rye dry. Your bread will be all the softer for it."

"There's no time to be lost," Makalas told him.

"It's going to rain. The clouds are gathering."

"Clouds? Where are they? There's not a sign of rain," Strakalas said.

"The crows are cawing and that's a sure sign of it, I can feel it coming," Makalas returned.

"You're way off, neighbour! I haven't seen my rooster taking a dust bath yet and that means the rain is still far away."

"Pooh! You and your rooster!" Makalas said, adding doggedly, "It's going to rain tonight, I tell you! I feel it in my bones."

"Bones nothing! I have a good nose for such things. I sniffed the air this morning and I know we'll have fine weather for another three days."

"Oh, stuff! I don't have to sniff the air to know it's going to rain."

They kept it up till evening, and Makalas's rye was left in the field.

On the next day it was Strakalas who insisted it would rain in the afternoon and Makalas who said it would not.

They went on arguing like that for several days till all of a sudden down came the rain! It poured steadily for three days but as soon as it stopped the two friends began arguing about the weather again. They were still at it when the rain came down anew. By that time their rye had put forth shoots and both were left without bread.

In the spring Strakalas's hayloft was hit by lightning

and caught fire. The fire spread to Makalas's storeroom. Their neighbours rushed to help them and would have put out the fire had not the two friends begun arguing again, Makalas maintaining that a fire started by lightning was best quenched with sour milk and Strakalas, that sour milk was as nothing compared to sand. While they were at it their houses and everything else they had burnt down to the ground.

Strakalas and Makalas were left without a roof over their heads. They each made themselves a large sack

and went begging for alms.

And to this day that is how the two braggarts make their living.





THE SIX TOOTHLESS MEN AND A SQUINTEYED ONE

In the village of Shortlegs, at the foot of Mount Hammer, not far from Lake Spoon, there lived six Toothless Men and a Squinteyed one.

The six Toothless Men did not get on with Squint-

eye.

One day they were crossing a meadow, and seeing Squinteye's bull, fell on him and killed him.

When his bull failed to return that night Squinteye went to look for him. He looked and he looked and

he found him lying in the field, dead. He skinned the bull, put the skin in a cart and brought it home.

On the next day his wife and he drove to a fair. There he helped his wife get into the bull's skin and told her what she was to do.

As soon as enough people had gathered nearby,

Squinteye sprang up on to his cart.

"Watch this, good folk!" cried he. "When the wife is inside, my bull sings and dances; when she is outside, he is still. Come, all, hurry and pay up! It's a bargain if there ever was one."

The people came running and stood round Squint-

eye.

"Come, little bull, dance for me!" said Squinteye.

The bull began to dance.

"Come, little bull, tell me what you had to eat today," said Squinteye.

"Stra-a-aw! ..." the bull brought out.

A murmur passed over the crowd.

"A marvel, a true marvel!" the people cried.

A merchant now pushed his way to the cart. He did not stop to bargain but paid out a thousand gold pieces for the talking bull.

"What did you mean by saying that when the wife was inside, your bull sang and danced, and when she was outside, he kept still?" asked he of Squinteye.

"That's simple," Squinteye replied. "You'll see for yourself in a moment." And he bade his wife climb out of the bull's skin.

"There you are!" said he. "When the wife is outside, the bull can do nothing."

The merchant saw that he had been tricked, but as there was no help for it, off he went without another word.

The six Toothless Men heard of Squinteye's good fortune and came to see him.

"We have heard that you are so rich now that you rake in your gold with a shovel," said they. "Tell us how you managed to bring this about."

Squinteye scratched the back of his head.

"You killed my bull in order to harm me, but good has come of it instead. For I skinned the bull and sold the skin at the fair for a thousand gold pieces."

The six Toothless Men went home, killed and skinned all of their bulls and on the next day took the skins to market.

Hearing the price they asked, a thousand gold pieces for a skin, the people there began laughing and mocking at them.

"You must be off your heads!" cried they. "Has anyone ever seen the like of this—to ask a thousand gold pieces for a bull's skin and one full of holes at that!"

"Drive them out of here! They have come to make fun of us!" cried the tradesmen.

At this the six Toothless Men rolled up the skins and ran for their lives, and they were glad to get home safe and sound. They saw that Squinteye had tricked them and decided to revenge themselves on him.

They made a sack of leather, caught Squinteye, thrust him into it, and, tying the sack, dragged it to the river.

Said the oldest of the six when they were on the bridge:

"Wait, let's rest for a bit and have a little something

to eat first. We can drown Squinteye later."

So they left the sack on the bridge and themselves went to a tavern.

Left to himself, Squinteye began rolling and kicking about in the sack and shouting with all his might:

"Let me out and there's something I'll show you!

Let me out and there's something I'll show you! "

An old shepherd heard his cries, and, taking pity on him, untied the sack.

"Now show me what you promised," said he.

"Have patience, good shepherd, I will soon

enough," Squinteye replied.

With these words he rooted out an old tree-stump, thrust it in the sack together with a large stone and tied the sack. After that he and the shepherd hid under the bridge and lay waiting there.

The six Toothless Men soon returned, and, seizing

the sack, flung it in the river.

"Take that, you trickster!" cried they. "Take that

and get what you earned! "

And Squinteye, who was alive and well, jumped out from under the bridge, ran to where the shepherd's flock was grazing and began tending it.

At sight of him the six Toothless Men opened their

mouths in amazement.

"Where have you come from?" asked they. "Why,

we threw you in the river not a minute ago."

"I really can't tell myself now where it is I have been—up in the sky or in the Garden of Eden," Squinteye replied. "I saw such beauty on the river bottom as words cannot describe! But I liked the sheep best of all, that's why I've brought them with me."

"Is there at least one such sheep left there?" the six

Toothless Men asked.

"As to that," said Squinteye and waved his hand, "I didn't take even a tenth of them! Here, I'll show you if you don't believe me."

And the six Toothless Men following him, he drove

the flock of sheep on to the bridge.

"See how many sheep are still down below!" said he, pointing at the reflection in the water.

"Yes, yes!" the Toothless Men cried.

The first to throw himself in the water was the oldest of them.

His friends heard him gurgling and gasping and

thought that he was calling the sheep.

"He'll get the fattest ones for himself!" cried they, much perturbed, and jumped into the water like so many frogs.

For a full hour they floundered about in the river and nearly drowned before managing to climb out on

to the bank.

And from that time on the six Toothless Men left Squinteye in peace.



LATVIAN FAIRY TALES









THE BRAVE ROOSTER

Once upon a time there lived in Vidzeme a poor man. He had nothing to his name, not even a roof of his own over his head, and lived in a little bath-house which he rented from a lord. And of course that, as everyone knows, is no sort of life! For whenever the lord wanted a bath, be it winter or summer, out the poor man had to go into the street!

Now, the poor man had a rooster who did him for a son and a brother and a friend, too. To look at

and talk to this rooster was his one pleasure in life.

The lord pressed the poor man hard, worked him half to death, cast his living in his bath-house in his teeth at every opportunity and finally drove him out of it together with his rooster. The poor man felt very sad, for there was no one to stand up for him even. and he burst into tears.

The lord's cruel conduct made the rooster very angry.

"Do not be grieved," said he to his master. "I'll go

to the lord and speak to him myself!"

And off he made for the lord's house.

On the way he met a bear. "Hullo there, bear!" said he.

"Hullo, rooster!" replied the bear. "Where are you going?"

"To see the lord and give him a piece of my mind

for having treated my master so badly."

"I'm coming with you!" said the bear.

On they went together and they met a wolf.

"Hullo, wolf!" said the rooster.

"Hullo, rooster!" the wolf replied. "Where are you going?"

"To see the lord and give him a piece of my mind

for having treated my master so badly."

"I'm coming with you!" said the wolf.

They went on together, and by and by a hawk came flying toward them.

"Hullo, hawk!" said the rooster.

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"Hullo, rooster!" the hawk replied. "Where are you going?"

"To see the lord and give him a piece of my mind

for having treated my master so badly."

"I'm coming with you!" said the hawk.

They came to the lord's house, and the bear, the wolf and the hawk hid behind some bushes while the

rooster flew up on to the gate and sang out:

"Cock-a-doodle-doo! Listen to me, lord, and beware! You drove my master out of the bath-house, and I'll drive you out of your house and off your land for having treated him so badly."

Now, the lord was sitting on the terrace having his coffee, and so angry did the rooster's song make him that he ordered his servants to catch the rooster and throw him in the goose-house for the geese to nip to death. The servants caught the rooster and threw him in the goose-house but the hawk flew in after him and killed all the geese.

In the morning the rooster flew out of the goose-

house and on to the gate and sang out again:

"Cock-a-doodle-doo! Listen to me and beware, lord! You drove my master out of the bath-house and I'll drive you out of your house and off your land for having treated him so badly."

Now, the lord was sitting on the terrace just then waiting for his morning coffee. So enraged was he that he ordered the rooster to be thrown in the cowhouse for the cows and the bulls to gore to death. The servants caught the rooster and threw him in the cow-house.

Said the wolf at this:

"Well, I suppose it's my turn now!" And in he slipped into the cow-house after the rooster.

In the morning the farm hands came into the cow-house and what did they see but all the cows and 2 bulls lying there dead, their throats slit by the wolf. And as for the rooster, he was alive and well, and,

flying up on to the gate again, sang out:

"Cock-a-doodle-doo! Listen to me and beware, lord! You drove my master out of the bath-house and I'll drive you out of your house and off your land for having treated him so badly."

The lord did not even touch his coffee, so angry was he, but ordered his servants to throw the rooster in a stable for the horses to trample to death. The servants caught the rooster and threw him in the stable where the most spirited of the horses were kept.

Said the bear:

"Well, I suppose it's my turn now."

And in he rushed into the stable after the rooster.

In the morning the farm hands came into the stable. and what did they see but all the horses lying there dead, mauled to death by the bear.

The rooster flew out of the stable and on to the

gate and sang out as he had before:

"Cock-a-doodle-doo! Listen to me and beware, lord! You drove my master out of the bath-house and I'll drive you out of your house and off your land for having treated him so badly! "

The lord who was on the terrace could not keep his seat. Up he jumped and down he ran into the yard and he bade his servants catch the rooster and kill him. And the rooster began calling to the bear, the wolf and the hawk to make haste and come to his aid.

They came running, and, oh, what a battle was fought in the yard! The rooster pecked, the bear mauled, the wolf tore and the hawk clawed. Away

helter-skelter ran the lord's servants and so far did they go that they could not find their way back afterwards!

The rooster flew at the lord and pinned him to the ground.

"Choose!" cried he. "Either you die or agree to tend my pigs and look after my dogs."

Said the lord in reply:

"I'd rather tend pigs than die any day!"

At this the hawk flew to his nest, the wolf ran to the field to do whatever it was he had a mind to do. and the bear made off for the forest. And as for the rooster, he brought his master to the lord's house, and they settled down there together and lived happily ever after, and the lord tended their pigs for them and looked after their dogs.





HOW THE BIRDS AND ANIMALS DUG A BED FOR THE DAUGAVA

Long, long ago all the birds and animals got together to dig a bed for the river Daugava. They set to work, and the rabbit said that he would run ahead and show them where the river bed was to lie. This he did, but, like all rabbits, he ran in circles and zigzags, and that is why there are so many loops and turns to the Daugava.

Just behind the rabbit came the mole. He worked very hard and dug the first furrow, and he was richly

rewarded for it, getting a coat of very soft and shiny black velvet that he wears to this day.

All the birds and animals did their bit. The only one

who refused to come and help was the oriole.

"The water that falls from the sky is enough for me," said she. "I don't need the kind that flows over the ground."

The birds and animals were very hurt at this and decided to punish the oriole: she was not to get any river water at all to drink and from then on would have to make do with rain water.

So now you know why the oriole is always so thirsty in the dry season and we hear her calling:

"When's the rain coming? When's the rain coming?"





THE FROG THAT CAME FROM RIGA AND THE FROG THAT CAME FROM LIEPAJA

In olden times there lived two frogs, one of them in Riga and the other in Liepaja. Now, one of them, the one from Liepaja, once bethought her of seeing what life in Riga was like, while the Riga frog told herself that it would be fun to see what life was like in Liepaja.

Off set the Liepaja frog on her way, she hopped and she hopped and she climbed a high hill and saw

that another frog was hopping towards her from the direction of Riga.

"Where are you going?" asked the Liepaja frog.

"To see what life is like in Liepaja," the Riga frog replied.

"And I'm going to Riga to see what life is like there,"

mid the Liepaja frog.

They began talking among themselves and agreed that the way before them was long, that they had much to fear from storks and that it would not be easy to clear the deep, waterbogged ruts in the roads.

"Look here," one of them said, "why don't we stand up on our hind legs and see what Riga and Liepaja look like from the top of the hill! Then we won't need to walk all these weary miles from town to town."

No sooner said than done. They stood up face to face on their hind legs and fixed their eyes on the acene before them.

Said the Riga frog when they had gazed their fill: "Listen, sister, your Liepaja looks just like my Riga!"

"Yes, and your Riga looks just like my Liepaja!"

the Liepaja frog returned.

"If that's the way it is, there's no need for us to go

any further," the two of them decided.

But what they had quite forgotten was that it was in the back of their heads they had their eyes, so that standing the way they had, they had been looking not at what lay ahead but at what lay behind them.

And thus it is that the poor frogs do not know to this day that Riga and Liepaja are not in the least

alike.



THE KINDHEARTED LAD AND HIS FOUR FRIENDS

Once upon a time there lived a man and his son. One day it so happened that there was no bread left in the house, so the father gave the son a ruble for him to buy some. The son took the money and set off for the market.

He walked and he walked and what did he see but a peasant beating his dog so hard that it looked as if he meant to kill it. Said the son, going up to him:

"Please don't beat the dog, peasant! I'll give you a ruble if you let it go."

The peasant agreed and left the dog alone, and the son gave him the ruble and went back home to his father without any bread.

The father met him on the doorstep.

"Well, have you brought the bread?" he asked.

"No, I haven't," replied the son. "What's a ruble! You can't buy anything with it. I must have more if we are to have any bread."

But he kept the truth from his father and never told him what he had done with the money.

On the next day, as there was nothing at all to eat in the house, the father gave the son another ruble to buy bread with. The son took the money and set out for the market.

He walked and he walked and what did he see but the same peasant beating a mouse.

"Please don't beat the mouse, peasant!" he cried.

"I'll give you a ruble if you let it go."

The peasant agreed and left the mouse alone, and the son gave him the money and went back home to his father without any bread.

The father met him on the doorstep.

"Well, have you brought the bread?" he asked.

"No, I haven't," the son replied. "What's a ruble! You can't buy anything with it. I must have more if we are to have any bread."

There was nothing to be done, and the father was

left hungry again.

On the third morning he gave the son yet another ruble and told him to be sure to buy some bread this

time, for there wasn't so much as a crumb in the house.

The son took the money and set out for the market.

He walked and he walked and what did he see but the selfsame peasant beating a cat. The sight was too much for him.

"Please don't beat the cat, peasant!" he cried. "I'll

give you a ruble if you let it go."

The peasant agreed and left the cat alone. The son gave him the money and went back home without any bread again.

The father met him on the doorstep.

"He's sure to have brought the bread this time," said he to himself, but seeing the son coming up to him empty-handed, knew that this was not the case.

"Well, have you brought the bread?" he asked just

to make sure.

"No, I haven't," the son replied. "What's a ruble! I must have more if we are to have any bread."

The father did not argue and, when morning came,

gave him a ruble.

The son took the money and told himself that he would certainly buy some bread this time-he couldn't very well let his father starve!

He set off for the market, he walked and he walked, and what did he see but the selfsame peasant beating a snake.

"Please don't beat the snake, peasant!" he cried.

"I'll give you a ruble if you let it go."

The peasant agreed and left the snake alone. The son gave him the money, and the peasant went off with it laughing to himself, for wasn't this a foolish lad indeed—to pay out a whole ruble just to save a dumb creature's life!

As for the snake, so grateful was it for its delivery

that it gave the son a magic ring, saying:

"Take this ring. If ever you want for anything, twist it round on your finger, say what it is you want half under your breath, and you will have it. And if you need any bread, just knock the ring against a millstone, and you'll get more than your fill."

The son was overjoyed. He took the ring and hur-

ried home with it.

The father met him on the doorstep.

"Well, have you brought the bread?" asked he.

"No," the son replied. "But now we'll have more than enough."

At this the father only stared, for where could the bread come from if there wasn't a crumb in the house!

But what was his wonder and surprise when the son walked up to a millstone, knocked his ring against it wished for some bread. for—lo behold! -there before them lay loaves and loaves of

From that time on the father and son never wanted for anything: the son had only to twist the ring on his finger, and whatever it was they needed they got.

They lived in this way for a time and had not a care

in the world. Then one day the son said to himself:

"Wouldn't it be fine if the leaves on the trees turned to diamonds and gold?"

He twisted the ring on his finger, and the same moment the trees near their hut were covered with gold and diamond leaves, and everything around became as beautiful as can be.

Soon, rumour of it spread throughout the coun- 2

tryside, and the lord of the manor came to see the miracle for himself. He looked, and he saw that the people had indeed spoken the truth. So he asked the son to come and cast a spell over his garden, too, that the trees in it might have gold and diamond leaves as they did in his. The son agreed and off he went with the lord to his castle.

He walked round the garden and twisted the ring, and at once gold and diamond leaves appeared on all the trees. But the lady of the house had noticed the ring on his finger and had seen him twist it. She told the lord about it and he asked the son not to go back home that day but to spend the night in the castle. Suspecting nothing, the son agreed. He had no sooner fallen asleep than the lady crept up to him and took away his magic ring, but she never knew that at her touch the ring had lost all its magic powers.

On the following morning everyone looked and saw that the trees were just as they had ever been and that the gold and diamond leaves were gone. So they seized the son and threw him in a dungeon, for, said they, he was nothing but a common swindler. He was sentenced to death then and there, and it was decided to hang him in the morning.

What was the son to do? The walls of the dungeon were thick and the doors strong, and, as he did not have the ring any more, there seemed to be no way of escaping death.

It was then that the mouse, the dog and the cat came to their friend's aid. The mouse and the cat made their way into the castle at night, crept into the lady's bed-chamber and set up watch there. Now, the lady, fearing lest the ring be stolen, had been keeping

it in her mouth all this time, and when she opened her mouth a little in her sleep, the mouse quickly slipped the tip of its tail into it. The lady started awake, she coughed, and the ring rolled out of her mouth and over the floor. The cat snatched it up, and, darting out of the door, rushed off with it. In the meantime the dog had been scratching away at the wall and had made a hole in it, and the cat now wriggled through the hole into the dungeon and gave the ring to the son. The son was overjoyed. He slipped the ring on his finger, twisted it and wished himself out of the dungeon.

The same moment the walls parted, and the son stepped out of the dungeon to freedom. He had nothing to fear any more, for now that the ring was in his possession, the lords could do him no harm.

So he and his father began living together again in their hut and were very, very happy.



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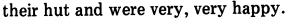
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THE PALACE OF THE CATS

A certain lord had three sons two of whom were clever lads and the third, the youngest, a fool. That is the way it used to be of old in all the lords' families.

The lord had a good life of it, but the years passed and at last old age crept up on him. Meanwhile, his sons had grown to manhood, so he began to think and to ponder to which of them to leave his house and land. Now, this started the two clever sons arguing.

"It is I who should get the house and land!" said one.

"No, I!" the other protested.

But the fool did not join in the argument and only

mocked at his clever brothers, saying:

"The house and land ought to be mine by rights, but just to settle it in a brotherly way, you can have them and welcome. All I want is the old bay horse and the plank cart."

But the clever brothers could not agree among themselves, and it looked as if it would come to a

fight.

The old lord listened to them quarrelling, and saw that nothing good would come of it. So he called his

sons to his side and said:

"You'll never settle your differences in this way, my sons. Better go and look for a pictured kerchief. Whoever brings me the prettiest one will get the house and land."

Well, then, it was time to stop arguing and do their

father's bidding.

On the very next day the two clever brothers prepared to set out in search of the kerchiefs. They took the best horses and plenty of money and they rode out of the yard through two different gates. But the fool stayed behind and never turned a hair.

Said his father to him:

"Don't you want to go and seek your fortune, too,

mv son?"

"Let my elder brothers look for the kerchiefs and perhaps they'll leave me nothing to look for," replied the fool with a laugh.

To this his father found nothing to say.

Some time passed and when only four days were left before the brothers were due to return, the fool harnessed the old bay horse to a plank cart and rode off through the third gate.

He rode and he rode and he didn't know where to go. So he slackened the reins and decided to let the

bay have its head.

On and on he rode in this way till he came to a large forest. Just ahead was a fork in the road, with a wide path branching off to the left and a narrow one to the right. The fool meant to take the wide path, but no sooner did his horse reach the fork than it turned off to the right.

"Let my horse follow the narrow path since that is what it wants," said the fool to himself and rode on.

Night soon came and the fool was surrounded by dense forest with not a gleam of light anywhere around. He was beginning to be cross with his horse for having brought them to where they were in danger of being eaten up by wolves, when, riding a little way further, he saw bright lights ahead. On he rode and soon arrived at a large palace. He wanted to come into the palace but stopped short, for there at the gate sat two huge cats, showing their teeth and looking very fierce. In his fright, the fool did not know what to do at first, but then, telling himself that the wolves would eat him up anyway, so he might as well risk being torn up by the cats, he walked calmly through the gate. At this the cats stopped showing their teeth, and, far from trying to turn on him, began rubbing themselves against his legs.

He came into the courtyard and was met by a great number of cats and tom-cats who—o wonder of wonders!—all spoke just like people do. They at once led the fool into the palace and his old bay horse to the stable and tried to do everything they could to please them.

In the morning the fool prepared to set out on his way, but the cats surrounded him and begged him to stay with them a little while longer. This the fool would have been glad to do but he knew that he had only three days left in which to find a kerchief more beautiful than the ones his brothers might bring. He told the cats about it, and the white cat said when she had heard him out:

"That's a trifling matter, my lad. Stay with us another three days and you'll have the kerchief to take with you and whatever else you might wish for besides."

The fool spent three days in the cats' palace and he felt like a king. The cats fed him and put him to bed and carried out his every wish.

On the evening of the third day they harnessed the fool's old bay horse to the plank cart, and the white cat gave the fool a small nut.

Said she in farewell:

"Go home in peace. Everything will be well, only mind that you don't crack the nut on the way."

The fool got into his cart and away he rode in a cloud of dust!

And as for the two clever brothers, they were already back home by then and showing their father the kerchiefs they had brought. The kerchiefs were indeed beautiful, though not as beautiful as they might have been, but the brothers and their horses were hard to recognise, so wasted and worn were they.

The fool rode into the yard, and his old bay horse pranced about in the liveliest fashion, and he himself looked hale and fit and not in the least worn out.

Said his father:

"It looks as if you've had a gay time of it wherever it is you've been, my son, but whether or not you got a rich gift in parting remains to be seen."

The fool laughed.

"I've had a gay enough time and I've brought a rich gift with me, too!" said he.

He took the nut the white cat had given him out of his pocket, flipped it lightly, and at once a kerchief so beautiful appeared in his hands that it seemed to set the whole chamber alight.

The two clever brothers were thunderstruck at the sight.

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Said the father:

"Well, my sons, you can see for yourselves that it is the fool to whom my house and land must go, for he has brought a kerchief so beautiful that its match cannot be found anywhere in the world."

The kerchief was indeed one to feast the eye, and the clever brothers could not find fault with it, but they refused to give up the house and land to the fool.

"Well, if I can't have them, I can't," said the fool. "Of course, they belong to me by rights, but since you want them so much you can divide them between you. Just leave me the old bay horse and the plank cart."

Day and night the clever brothers were at it, arguing, but divide the house and land between them they could not.

"It is I who should get the house and land!" cried one.

"No, I!" insisted the other.

The father tried time and again to make peace between them, but to no avail.

One day he called his three sons to his side again and said:

"Whichever of you gets the house and land has to marry in any case. So set off now and seek for wedding dresses for your brides. The house and land will go to him who brings the most beautiful dress."

The clever brothers took their best horses and plenty of money and away they rode through two different parts of Part the feel parent turned a heir

ent gates. But the fool never turned a hair.

"Don't you want to go and seek your fortune, too, my son?" asked his father.

Said the fool in reply as he had the first time:

"Let my elder brothers look for the dresses and then perhaps I'll have nothing to look for."

To this the father found nothing to say.

Time passed and when only four days were left before the brothers were due to return, the fool harnessed his old bay horse to the plank cart and rode off through the third gate.

Once again the poor lad was at a loss where to go. But since the bay horse had turned out to be cleverer than he the first time he felt that it ought to be given its head this time, too. He slackened the reins, and at once the bay quickened its pace and went so fast that it was all he could do to hold on.

Toward evening they rode up to the palace of the cats again, and there, by the palace gate, sat the two huge cats just as they had the first time, showing their

teeth and looking fiercely at him. But the fool was not a bit afraid. Out he sprang from the cart and made straight for the palace.

This time, too, a great number of cats, large and small, came running up. They welcomed the fool as if he were a king and they led him into the palace and

his horse to the stable.

In the morning the fool prepared to set off on his way again, but the cats surrounded him on all sides and begged him to bide with them a little longer. This the fool would have been glad to do were it not that he had only three days left in which to bring home a wedding dress more beautiful than any his clever brothers might find. He told the cats about it, and the white cat said when she had heard him out:

"That's a trifling matter, my lad. Bide with us another three days and you'll have anything you wish

for to take home with you."

Well, if that were so, the fool was nothing loath,

and so he spent another three days in the palace.

On the evening of the third day the cats harnessed the old bay horse to the plank cart, and the white cat gave the fool a little box, saying in parting:

"Go home in peace and all will be well but mind

you don't open the box on the way."

The fool got into the cart and away he rode in a

cloud of dust!

The two clever brothers were already home and showing their father the wedding dresses they had brought. The father looked and saw that the dresses were beautiful indeed, though not as beautiful as they might have been, but his sons and their horses were so wasted and worn that it was hard to recognise them.

Just then the fool rode into the yard in his plank cart, and so fast did he go that the gate shook.

Said the father:

"It looks like you've had a gay time of it, my son, but whether or not you were given a rich gift in parting remains to be seen."

The fool gave a laugh.

"It's a gay time I've had and a fine gift I've brought with me! "said he, and, opening the box, brought out the dress.

Seeing it, the father and the two clever brothers could hardly believe their eyes, for it was more beautiful than any a princess might have.

Said the father to his clever sons:

"Well, my sons, you can see for yourselves that it is the fool to whom the house and land must go, for he has brought a wedding dress than which there is no finer in the world."

The clever brothers agreed that the dress was indeed one to feast the eye, but they would not hear of giving up the house and land to the fool.

The fool did not try to argue with them.

"The house and land are mine by rights," said he, "but you can have them to divide as you will between you. All I want is the old bay horse and the plank cart."

The two clever brothers began arguing, they argued day and night, but divide the house and land between them they could not.

"It is I who should have them!" cried one.

"No, I!" the other insisted.

The father listened to them for a time but said nothing for he hoped that they would settle the matter quietly between them. But, seeing that it might come to a fight before long, he called all the three sons to his side and said:

"What was was and there's no help for it, but I won't allow it to go on like that. Go, all of you, and let each of you find himself a bride."

let each of you find himself a bride."

Such was their father's will, so there was nothing the brothers could do but set out to seek brides for themselves. The two clever brothers took the best horses and plenty of money and away they rode through two different gates. But the fool never turned a hair. The days passed, and there he was, still at home. The father felt that it was high time for him to be setting off but the fool made no move to do so.

At last the father could contain himself no longer.

"Don't you want to go and seek your fortune, too, my son?" asked he.

But the fool only laughed.

"Let my elder brothers look for their brides, and then perhaps I won't need to look for mine so long," said he.

The father found nothing to say to this.

Then, just four days before his brothers were due to return, the fool harnessed his little old bay horse to the plank cart again and away he rode through the third gate.

"Now, where shall I go?" thought he. "The cats gave me the kerchief and wedding dress, but where would they find me a beautiful bride? Oh, well, since the little bay horse proved to be cleverer than I both times, it can have its head now, too."

And the horse trotted on even faster than before and turned down the selfsame road that led to the

selfsame palace. Reaching the palace, it stopped by the gate where, just as they had before, sat the two huge cats, showing their teeth and looking very fierce.

"This is where the little bay horse brought me, so this is where I'll stay," said the fool to himself, and

he made for the palace.

Seeing him, the cats came running up from all sides just as they had before. They gave him a royal welcome and they led the little bay horse to the stable.

That evening the fool walked all around the palace and looked in every corner, hoping to find at least one human being living here among all these cats. But search as he might, he found no one—no one, that is, except more cats. Grieved, the poor lad waited till morning and then prepared to take his leave. But the cats surrounded him on all sides and asked him why he was so sad. The fool told them that what was troubling him was that perhaps his brothers had already found themselves beautiful brides while he had not so much as laid eyes on his.

Said the white cat:

"Oh, that's a trifling matter, my lad. Bide with us another three days and you'll have the most beautiful bride of all to take home with you and anything else you may wish for besides."

Well, if this were so, the fool was nothing loath, so he spent another three days with the cats, and they attended to all his needs and tried to please him just as if he were a king.

On the evening of the third day it was time for the fool to be setting out for home, but the cats would not let him go and asked him to spend one last night with them, for, said they, how could he take his bride

through such a dense forest, and in the middle of the night, too!

There was nothing for it, so the fool stayed in the

palace for another night.

But, oh, what a fright he had because of it! He went to bed in the evening just as he had the first two times, but some time around midnight woke up to hear the wind howling wildly in the tower. It howled for a long time, and then suddenly a whirlwind tore through the palace, and so fierce was it that the earth quaked and shook and all the doors and windows flew open. The fool was frightened half to death and ran to ask the cats what had happened. But—o wonder of wonders!—all the cats in the palace had turned into men and women, and the white cat was now a princess and so beautiful that her like could not be found anywhere, not even beyond the thrice-nine kingdom.

The beautiful princess rushed to the fool and she

called him her own dear husband.

In the meantime the grooms had harnessed ten horses, the little old bay at the head, to a coach, and off the fool and the princess now rode for home! So fast did they go that the trees alongside the road bent to the ground and when they were a mile away from the fool's house the gate posts flew up into the air.

At sight of the princess whose beauty seemed to light up the house, the wives of the two clever brothers were all for running away then and there. And the father at once gave his house and land to the fool and he wanted to drive his two clever sons out altogether. But the fool would take nothing for himself but the old bay horse and the plank cart and divided the rest equally between his brothers.

The fool and the princess went back to their palace and there they held their wedding. It was a gay wedding indeed and they had guests there from every corner of the earth!

I was invited, too, and, since this was no ordinary wedding but a royal one, I bought myself a coach of bread and horses of cake, shoes made of carrots and a hat made of butter, a glass dress and a paper umbrella. I got to the palace safely and in good time and I saw all there was to see and heard all there was to hear. There was plenty of food and plenty of drink for all, and everyone feasted and made merry to his heart's content. The fool's father was at the wedding and so were his two clever brothers with their wives, and there were many maids of noble birth and many princesses, too, but none was as beautiful as the fool's bride.

It was at the wedding that I heard that the palace where the fool and his beautiful princess were living had once belonged to a king. One day it had been beset by devils who had turned all the people into cats, and the spell could only be broken if a man, any man, came to the palace three times and spent three days and three nights there every time. Now, this was just what the fool had done and thus it was that he had set the beautiful princess and her servants free. Had he not come when he had, in thrice-nine years the devils would have eaten up all the cats.

It was a gay time I had at the wedding, but when I got into my coach of bread and was about to drive off for home a pack of dogs ran up, fell on the coach and ate it up! I called for help, and some young lads came running. They drove off the dogs but before I could

stop them ate up my horses.

Now that my coach and horses were gone, I had to go on foot, but before I could get very far it began to rain and my paper umbrella was ruined. Then the rain stopped and the sun began to shine and my hat of butter melted. There was nothing to be done, so on I went without them. But my troubles did not end there, for I passed by a farm soon after and some goats saw me, and, falling on my carrot shoes, left me barefoot. Now I had nothing on but my glass dress. Just then a strong wind started up, I was hurled on to a large stone and my dress was shattered to bits! So there I was as naked as the day I was born. I couldn't for the life of me walk on like that, so I climbed into a barn and hid in a bundle of flax. And I might have been there to this day had not the fool's huntsmen been out hunting nearby at the time. They ran out of wads, so one of them slipped into the barn and snatched up the very bundle of flax in which I was hiding. He dragged me to the forest and thrust me in his gun, and there was nothing I could do to stop him. Bang! went the gun, and away I flew beyond the swamps and the forests. I came to a week later and found myself where you see me now. So that's my story, and that's what's apt to happen to a wedding guest!





THE BEAR WHO MARRIED A PEASANT'S DAUGHTER

Once upon a time there lived an old peasant. He was not badly off except that his wife had died leaving him alone with their only daughter.

Now, all of the peasant's kin, not counting some in-laws, lived far away from him, and one day, making up his mind to pay them a visit, he left his daughter at home by herself and drove away.

On and on he drove and he strayed off the road time and again, for it led through dense forests (the 2)

forests were larger in those days and there were no high roads), but he got there finally. His kinsfolk were all in good health and prosperous and the peasant spent some time with them and then started off for home again.

Night caught him as he was passing through a large forest, and the peasant lost his way. Round and round he circled and at last found himself in so dense a thicket that he feared he would never get out of it. By and by he saw a bright light ahead. Thinking that there might be a house there, he drove toward it. But when he had driven up close he saw before him no ordinary house but a beautiful palace. He did not like to enter it at first, for he feared that he, a simple peasant, might not be welcome there, but, remembering that there was nowhere else he could go, made for the door.

He came inside and looked in every nook and corner, but there was not a soul to be seen anywhere.

All of a sudden, as if out of thin air, a large bear came lumbering toward him.

"What do you want here?" asked the bear.

The peasant was frightened, thinking that his end had come and that the bear would tear him to bits, but the bear never touched him.

"What do you want here?" he asked again. "I will help you if I can."

Said the peasant:

"I was coming back home from my kinsfolk's house and I lost my way in the forest. I'll never be able to find it again in the dark, so could you please tell me where I could spend the night?"

"You can stay in the palace," the bear replied.

"There is no one here but me."

Seeing that he had nothing to fear from the bear, the peasant agreed.

The bear gave him some supper and ate with him, and the peasant only marvelled to see him go about everything just as if he were not a bear at all but a man.

After supper they decided to get some sleep, and the bear, the peasant found, slept like a man, too-in a bed. The peasant was overcome with wonder at the sight. This was a strange bear, indeed—to be living in a huge palace all by himself and to be doing everything just like a man.

In the morning the bear fed the peasant again. "Well, what are you going to do now?" asked he. "I'd like to go home," the peasant replied.

"Go ahead, then."

Off the peasant set on his way. He drove through the forest for a long time, but no matter where he went he found himself back at the palace again every time.

It was there he was when evening set in, and he could do nothing about it.

So in he went to see the bear again and ask him to let him pass the night in the palace.

The bear let him in as he had the night before, gave him food and drink, put him to bed and looked after his horse, too.

Morning came, and the peasant said:

"Do show me the way home!"

"That I will," replied the bear, "but you must give me your daughter in marriage in return."

Now, this the peasant did not like to do. Not that his daughter would not be well off in the palace, only

how could she marry a bear! ... It was not to be thought of.

There was nothing for it but to find the way out of the forest without the bear's help.

All day the peasant circled the forest but when

evening came he found himself at the palace again.

What was there to be done but ask the bear to let him in for the night again! The bear made him welcome as he had before. He gave him food and drink, put him to bed and looked after his horse.

Morning came, and the peasant said to the bear:

"Do show me the way home!"

"That I will," the bear replied, "but you must give

me your daughter in marriage in return."

The peasant was about to agree, but, thinking that his daughter wouldn't like it, resolved to try just once more to find the way home by himself.

He circled the forest all day, round and round he drove, but when evening came found himself at the selfsame palace again. He now knew that, like it or not, there was no way out for him but to promise his daughter in marriage to the bear.

The bear received him with all the politeness due a father-in-law and tried to please him in every way he could. He gave him food and drink, put him to bed and looked after his horse, too. There was nothing the peasant needed to do himself.

In the morning the bear went with the peasant and showed him the way home.

The peasant returned home with heavy heart, and his daughter at once saw that something was amiss.

"Is any of our kin dead or gravely ill?" asked she. Loath as the peasant was to tell his daughter about

the bear, he knew that he had to. So he told her all about everything, even to the promise he had made the bear to give her to him in marriage. Of course, the bear lived in a rich palace and behaved just like a man but that still did not make him one.

The daughter heard him out but she was not in the

least put out. Said she to her father:

"The bear did you no harm, he even helped you to get back home. So that means he'll do me no harm, either."

So after a time off they set together and drove to the bear's palace, and no welcome could have been

better than the one the bear gave them.

The peasant stayed in the palace for a few days and then he went home, but his daughter remained with the bear. They lived together in peace and happiness, and being there with him under one roof day in and day out the maid noticed that the bear had a man's body under his skin. So she decided to watch him as he was making ready for bed.

One night she did not go to bed herself but crept up to the bear's room and peeped in at the door. And what did she see but the bear take off his bearskin and turn into a man with only his head remaining a bear's head. The maid liked him that way more than ever and she said to herself that it would be a good thing to free him of the bearskin altogether.

Once, when the bear was fast asleep, she tiptoed in, took the skin that was lying at his feet and threw it in

the stove.

The skin burnt quite away but the bear fell gravely ill. The maid knew why this was and she was very sorry for the bear, but there was nothing she could do to help him. The bear lay there for a day and he grew worse. He lay there for a second day and he was worse still and looked as if he were about to die. There sat the maid beside him on his bed and wept bitterly, but all her wails and sobs availed her nothing. The third day came and the bear was at his last gasp. The maid told herself that he was going to die and she nearly died of grief herself.

But the third day passed and the third night, too, and in the morning the bear turned into a prince so handsome that one could not take one's eyes off him. The maid was much surprised and as happy as could be. She threw her arms round the prince's neck and begged him to forgive her for having made him suffer so. But the prince, far from being angry, did not know how to thank her enough. For, said he, the devil himself had turned him into a bear and his skin had to be burnt before he could become a man again. No one had known about it until she had come and broken the spell.

The prince and the peasant's daughter then held a gay wedding feast and invited all and sundry to it. There was enough food and drink for everyone and the guests ate and drank to their hearts' content.

The peasant came and could not get over his surprise at seeing the tall and handsome prince there before him instead of the bear. He did not go back home any more but stayed in the palace with his daughter and son-in-law.

And for all we can tell, they must be living there still, and if only we knew where their palace was we could pay them a visit.



THE THREE KNOTS

There were once a man and a woman who had one son. From his earliest years the boy was drawn to water. He had only to come out of the house, and there he was by the pond and in danger of falling in and drowning. His mother punished him and his father never spared the rod, but nothing helped—the pond drew him as before and whatever came to hand he would at once throw in it. The mother would

miss now a wooden spoon, now a mortar, now a hat, now a pair of shoes, and every time there they were floating in the pond, the boy playing at sailing boats with them. And when he was a little older he would climb into a wooden tub or a feeding-trough and sail round the pond. There was just no stopping him at all!

So the mother and father decided, since they could do nothing to break him of these habits, to let him become a sailor. They took the boy to an old seaman and asked him to take him in training. The seaman agreed, and, when the boy had been with him for some time, brought him back to the mother and father and said:

"I have taught your son everything I myself knew.

He will make a fine sailor."

And he gave his pupil a piece of rope with three knots in it.

"You now know what seas there are and what winds," said he. "But knowing this is not enough; you must learn to govern them as well. If there is no wind and the sea is calm a sailor must have patience and wait till it begins to blow and the sails fill out. If the wind is raging and there is a storm at sea he needs strength and courage in order not to lose heart. You are a good lad and I've grown fond of you, so I'm giving you this piece of rope for a gift. So long as it is with you you can sail the seas in any kind of weather without fear. If there is a calm, undo the first knot and a fair wind will start to blow. If you are pursued by pirates, undo the second knot and a storm will begin such as will force them to leave you alone. If the storm keeps up too long and you want it to subside, undo the third knot and the sea will be calm again."

The youth began sailing the seas, and as fair winds followed him wherever he went he soon became known as the Lucky Skipper.

One day the Lucky Skipper cast anchor near the king's own city. Many ships were moored there at the time and they were making ready to put to sea when suddenly a dead calm fell. Not a ripple disturbed the water and, on land, not a leaf stirred on a tree, and willy-nilly all the ships had to remain in harbour. A day passed by, and a second day, and still there was no wind. The captains sat on their bridges and whistled, trying to bring on the wind, for what else was there to do, and they fumed and raged and cursed the calm.

But more disheartened than any of the captains was the young prince of the realm, for he had to sail for the neighbouring kingdom soon or his bride-to-be, who awaited him there, would be given in marriage to another.

A day went by, and the prince promised a sack of gold to the captain who would take him to his bride. A second day went by, and he promised him his lifelong friendship. A third day went by, and he promised him his father's whole kingdom. There was not a captain there but would have been glad enough to have the gold and the prince's friendship and his father's kingdom, but what could they do when there was no wind!

On the fourth day the prince was on the verge of despair. He would not eat or drink, refused to wear any of his fine clothing and threatened to put an end to his life.

Hearing about it, the Lucky Skipper felt sorry for

the prince and offered to take him where he wanted to go. He undid the first knot on his piece of rope and at once a fair wind began to blow. The ship was soon out of harbour and going so fast that she left huge breakers in her wake.

They arrived in the neighbouring kingdom just in time, for the bride's father had had it announced throughout that if the bridegroom failed to arrive by morning he would give his daughter in marriage to another.

The prince and the princess were married, and so rich and gay was their wedding that the whole kingdom was drunk for half a year.

The prince stayed with his wife in her land and became king in her father's stead, and he said that the Lucky Skipper could have his father's kingdom in reward for his services.

The Lucky Skipper put to sea and sailed back again. He put into port, anchored his ship and went to pay the old king a visit and see how things were. It was in the palace that he first beheld the king's youngest daughter and knew that he never wanted to part with her again. The princess, too, liked the Lucky Skipper at sight and told him that she preferred him to all her other suitors. She was very beautiful and there had always been matchmakers milling about in the king's anteroom, but she had refused everyone, saying that she did not want to marry and leave her father alone.

Now, however, she made her choice openly known, and there was nothing the matchmakers from all the many lands and realms could do but go away. Only one man asked to be allowed to remain for a little

while, and that was the ruler of an island kingdom who said that he hoped to meet another maid there and come to like her enough to marry her. So stay there he did, and none guessed that he had another and evil purpose in mind.

When night came this man and his attendants seized the beautiful princess and put her on board his ship, and they were soon under way and out in the open sea.

The grief of the princess's father and that of her promised husband can well be imagined. But whereas the old king sat about and moped and shed tears the Lucky Skipper wasted no time and, all sails set, flew in pursuit.

After some days he reached the island king's realm. Underwater rocks and reefs surrounded the island from all sides and there seemed to be no way of approaching it.

Deciding to bide his time, the Lucky Skipper cast anchor some distance away. But at once all the island king's ships made sail and bore down upon him. They bristled with guns and grapnels, and the faces of the men on board were the most ferocious he had ever seen. The Lucky Skipper knew what to expect without being told. He took out the piece of rope that the old seaman had given him and undid two of the knots. At once a lashing wind broke loose, and waves, each higher than the one before, came sweeping in from all sides. Sails flapped madly, shrouds creaked, masts crashed down into the water, the sides of the enemy ships were cleft, rats scuttled about on the decks, and the men yelled and shrieked in terror. They would have been glad to get back to shore but

could not! So fierce was the storm that the Lucky Skipper's ship, though held down by anchors, was flung about like a chip of wood.

The Lucky Skipper waited a little while and then undid the third knot. The storm subsided. The Lucky Skipper looked round for the enemy ships but there was nothing on the now calm waters but some casks and boards. He made land, found his bride and sailed home with her.

Soon after that they were married, and so much was eaten and drunk at their wedding that to this day some of the people who were present there go around picking their teeth and holding their heads. There was much dancing and singing and playing of games, and all who were not too lazy took part in the merry-making.

At last it was all over, and the old king said to the Lucky Skipper:

"Well, my son, you must sit on my throne and reign in my stead!"

The Lucky Skipper thought this over.

"What do I want to be king for!" said he at last. "I'm happy enough on my ship. Many are the kings and rulers I have seen and it's not a life I covet. A king has got to fleece his subjects and war against his neighbours. No, I don't like it at all."

And off he made for his ship, and his young wife with him.

They began sailing the seas together, and fair winds always accompanied them.

Some time went by, and his wife presented the Lucky Skipper with a son, as fine a boy as his father had been, and they all lived very happily together till it was time for them to sail off on their last voyage. But we mustn't forget about the piece of rope with

the three knots, for you will be wondering where it is.

Well, like his father before him, the Lucky Skipper's son had taken to water like a duck and liked throwing all sorts of things in it—now it might be a pail that they missed on board, now a mop, now a life-belt, now an empty cask. And one day he came upon the piece of rope with the three knots and, of course, threw it overboard, too. So that was that!

But, oh, wouldn't it be fun if one of us could find

it!





HOW LAIMA MADE THREE WISHES COME TRUE

Once of a late winter night, Mother Laima who was wandering over the earth, came into a peasant's hut to get warm.

Before leaving, she called the peasant's wife to her side.

"Because you let me warm myself in your hut," said she, "I will make three of your wishes come true."

The peasant's wife was filled with excitement.

"Let the sausage get browned in the pan!" cried she without thinking.

The same moment the sausage in the pan began to hiss and to sizzle!

The peasant came running and began scolding his wife.

"You ninny you!" cried he. "Why couldn't you wish for some money? I hope the sausage sticks to your nose!"

No sooner were the words out of his mouth than there was the sausage stuck to his wife's face just under her nose, and there was no tearing it off!

The peasant was frightened and begged Laima to remove the sausage.

Laima did as he asked.

"You are not the first to have wasted my gifts so thoughtlessly," said she. "You told me your three wishes and I made them all come true. So goodbye for now and fare you well!"





BULBULIS THE BIRD

In a certain realm there lived a king who had three sons. One day the sons heard that the king of the thrice-three realm had a bird that did whatever it was commanded to do. This bird was kept in a golden cage that hung on a three-crowned lime-tree in the king's garden. It was let out in the morning, but in the evening it would come flying back to its cage and spend the night in it. But, most important of all, the

bird had a little ring on the claw of its left leg, and it was said that whoever took it off would have the bird in his power. Many had tried to get the ring but none had succeeded.

The three princes talked amongst themselves and

decided to go and have a try, too.

The eldest of the three prepared to set out first. He saddled his horse and away he rode, and the two younger brothers rode with him as far as the bridge. There, the eldest brother sprang to the ground, made three notches on the rail with his sword and bade his two younger brothers come every day and look at them. As long as the notches remained white and clean it would mean that all was well with him, but if drops of blood appeared on them then the brothers were to make haste and come to his aid.

On the ninth day the eldest brother arrived in the thrice-three realm. He came to the king's palace and said that he wanted to get the bird for himself. But the king shook his head, thought for a moment and

then said in reply:

"How ever do you mean to do it, my son! The bird is no ordinary bird but a magic one known as Bulbulis the Bird. Many were the men who tried to capture it but without success, and no matter how many more try to do it they will not succeed, either."

But the eldest brother would not be dissuaded.

"That may well be, but try I will just the same!" said he.

Well and good. The sun was just beginning to set when he came into the garden and began looking round for the three-crowned lime-tree. He looked to one side, and it wasn't there; he looked to another,

and it wasn't there, either. At last, he thrust his head in amid some thick birches, and there it was! Overjoyed, he pushed ahead and found himself in a small glade with the three-crowned lime-tree just before him and the golden cage hanging from its branch. The glade was grown with the thickest of grass, and, Bulbulis the Bird not yet having returned, a deep silence reigned all around.

The prince hid himself in the grass and waited.

By and by the whole garden seemed to come alive and swell with sound just as if thousands upon thousands of birds had suddenly burst into song there. Bulbulis the Bird now came flying up. It lighted on the cage, and, looking to all sides of it, said in the most piteous and sorrowful of tones:

"Everyone is asleep. Is there not a single soul anywhere around who will say: 'Why don't you go to

sleep, too, Bulbulis the Bird!"

Said the eldest brother to himself:

"Well, if that is all it wants I can do it. It's little enough."

And he said out loud:

"Go to sleep, Bulbulis the Bird!"

The same moment Bulbulis the Bird struck him with its wing, and—lo and behold! —the eldest brother turned into a birch.

On the following morning the two younger brothers came out on to the bridge and they saw that there were drops of blood on the notches.

The middle brother at once prepared to set out and seek his elder brother, and away he rode at a gallop for the thrice-three realm. There, he was met by the king who told him that his elder brother had gone

to the garden to catch Bulbulis the Bird but had not returned.

The middle brother came into the garden, he looked here and he looked there, but he saw neither his brother nor the three-crowned lime-tree. At last he thrust his head in amid some thick birches, and, yes, there was the lime-tree but not a sign of his brother.

The middle brother hid himself in the grass and waited. A deep silence reigned all around, but the sun soon set and then the whole garden came alive and swelled with sound just as if thousands upon thousands of birds had suddenly burst into song there. Bulbulis the Bird came flying up. It lighted on the golden cage, looked to all sides of it and said in the most piteous and sorrowful of tones:

"Everyone is asleep but me. Is there not a soul anywhere around who will say: 'Why don't you go to

sleep, too, Bulbulis the Bird!"

The middle brother said nothing, so after a while Bulbulis the Bird brought out again in the most piteous and sorrowful of tones:

"Everyone sleeps, I alone must stay awake. Is there truly not a single soul anywhere around who will say: 'Go to sleep, Bulbulis the Bird! ""

The middle brother was touched by these words and felt sorry for the bird.

"Go to sleep, Bulbulis the Bird!" said he.

The same moment Bulbulis the Bird struck him with its wing, and—lo and behold! —the middle brother turned into a birch.

On the following morning the youngest brother came to the bridge and he saw drops of blood on the notches. He prepared to set off at once to seek his 2 brothers and rode off at a gallop for the thrice-three realm.

There, he was met by the king who told him that his brothers had gone to the garden to catch Bulbulis the Bird but had not returned.

The youngest brother came into the garden, he looked here and he looked there but he saw neither his brothers nor the three-crowned lime-tree. At last he thrust his head in amid some thick birches, and, yes, there was the lime-tree! The grass around it was somewhat trampled but there was not a sign of his brothers.

The youngest brother hid himself in the grass within easy reach of the golden cage and waited. A deep silence reigned, but the sun soon set and the whole garden came alive and swelled with sound just as if thousands upon thousands of birds had suddenly burst into song there. Bulbulis the Bird came flying up. It lighted on the golden cage, looked to all sides and brought out in the most piteous and sorrowful of tones:

"Everyone is asleep. Is there not a soul anywhere around who will say: 'Go to sleep, Bulbulis the Bird!'

The youngest brother made no reply.

By and by Bulbulis the Bird brought out again in

the most piteous and sorrowful of tones:

"Everyone sleeps, I alone must stay awake. Is there truly not a single soul anywhere around who will say: 'Go to sleep, Bulbulis the Bird!'

The youngest brother said nothing again.

In a little while Bulbulis the Bird began wailing and weeping and it muttered between sobs:

"Everyone is asleep, I alone dare not close my eyes. Is there truly not a soul anywhere near who will say just these few words: 'Go to sleep, Bulbulis the Bird!'"

At this the youngest brother felt that he could not contain himself any longer and was about to speak when Bulbulis the Bird, tiring of repeating itself, hopped into its golden cage. Once there, it looked to all sides, and, not hearing or seeing anyone, buried its beak in its feathers and went to sleep. The youngest brother now knew that he had done well by keeping mum. He crept out of the grass very quietly and reached through the cage door for the ring on the bird's claw. He drew it off with his right hand and—bang!—shut the door of the cage with his left one.

Bulbulis the Bird started awake, it flung and tore about in the cage, beat its wings and wept and sobbed. Only toward dawn did it quieten down, and, hanging its head, said:

"You have my ring, so now I am in your power." "Tell me, Bulbulis the Bird, where are my brothers?" asked the youngest brother.

"The two birches beside you are your brothers."

"Tell me, Bulbulis the Bird, and what sort of creatures are the other birches growing here?"

"The other birches are men, too."

"Tell me, Bulbulis the Bird, how am I to bring them back to life?"

"Go deeper into the birch grove and if you look round you carefully you will see a heap of sand. Throw three handfuls of the sand at each of the birches and they will regain their proper shape."

Well and good. The youngest brother did as he was told. He revived his two brothers first and then the three of them began reviving the others together. But even so they could not do it fast enough. It was only when those they had brought back to life joined in their efforts that the birches began to vanish one by one, and the whole grove, indeed, the whole garden came astir and filled with men. They all surrounded the youngest brother and could hardly speak for joy.

The youngest brother then thought of a way of pleasing them even more and he asked Bulbulis the Bird to sing for them the way it had the night

before.

Bulbulis the Bird did as he asked, and its voice enchanted them all.

. Three days passed, and it was decided to part company, the three brothers going off in one direction, and the rest, in another.

It was noon when the three brothers reached the side of the sea. The two elder brothers wanted to walk on but the youngest was so tired that he lay down on the shore and dropped off to sleep.

Seeing him lying there, the two elder brothers, ungrateful wretches that they were, decided to steal Bulbulis the Bird from him and cast him in the

sea.

No sooner said than done. They took away Bulbulis the Bird and threw their brother in the sea, but they left the ring on his finger.

They came home and boasted to their father that they had caught Bulbulis the Bird and that it had cost them much trouble and effort, and they said that they did not know where their younger brother was.

They had thought that Bulbulis the Bird would obey their commands and shower them with riches, but, with the ring gone, it did nothing of the sort and only sat there with hanging head.

Much time passed, the two elder brothers lived in the palace and no twinge of conscience came to bother them. Not so the king their father who, though there was nothing he could do to bring his youngest son back, thought of him often and wept and sorrowed.

He would have been spared much grief had he known that his beloved son was alive and well. Though cast in the sea, he had not been drowned at all but carried to the sea queen's amber castle. Liking the tall and handsome prince, the queen had married him and they had been living happily together ever since.

One day the water nymphs came to them and told them that they had heard the old king lamenting the loss of his son. At this the prince took pity on his father and decided to pay him a visit. He rubbed the ring he had got from Bulbulis the Bird, and at once it turned into a golden bridge that stretched from his wife's amber castle to his father's palace.

Seeing his son safe and well, the king could hardly speak for joy. Then Bulbulis the Bird began to sing and it told the king how the prince had fared at his elder brothers' hands. The two brothers fell on their knees before their father and younger brother and begged their forgiveness, and so kindhearted was the youngest brother that not only did he forgive them but persuaded his father to do the same.

The youngest son spent three days with his father 28

and for all of the three days he never stopped telling him how happy he and the sea queen were together. And at dawn of the fourth day he took Bulbulis the Bird and wended his way homewards. And no sooner had the gate of the amber castle opened to admit him than the bridge vanished and turned back into a ring again.





STRONGFIST

There were once a man and a wife who had one son, a big, strong, healthy lad whom everyone called Strongfist. When Strongfist reached the age of eighteen he made up his mind to walk around the world. He forged himself a stick of iron weighing all of twenty poods, and not a day passed but he would beg his parents to let him go. The father agreed at once but the mother said:

"I won't let you go until you root out that old oak yonder and plant it in front of my window for me to remember you by."

That seemed a simple enough task to him and Strongfist only smiled. On the following morning, before breakfast was on the table, the oak was already swaying in front of his mother's window. Seeing it there, the mother put together a whole sack of food for Strongfist to take along and saw him off on his way.

Strongfist walked along the road at first, but when he saw that the people he met, alarmed by his size and bulk, were apt to run from him he turned off into the forest. He followed the forest path to its end, and, coming out of the forest, saw a man ploughing a field and wiping the sweat from his brow as he ploughed. The ploughman, however, was wiser than the others and made no attempt to run away. This pleased Strongfist no end.

"Is it so very hard to plough a field, then, friend?" asked he.

"What do you think! Can't you see that the sweat is pouring from me and my horse is all covered with lather?"

"See here, friend," Strongfist said, "it seems to me that your horse hasn't been fed properly. Unharness it and let it graze in the glen, and I'll pull the plough in its stead in the meantime."

The ploughman let loose his horse in the glen and harnessed Strongfist to the plough in its stead. But here was trouble anew—try as he might, the ploughman could not keep pace with Strongfist. He was forced to run after the plough and was soon completely worn out.

"This won't do at all!" Strongfist cried. "You'd better go and fetch us some dinner. I'll plough the

field by myself."

By the time the ploughman brought the food Strongfist had ploughed the whole field. They sat down, both of them, and began to eat. When they had finished, the ploughman thanked Strongfist for his help and prepared to take his plough home. But Strongfist stopped him, saying:

"How will you ever feed yourself with a field so small? Why, the crop it will yield is not big enough for yourself alone, to say nothing of your wife and children. Let me have the plough and I'll plough you

a field that will reach to the king's palace."

"You must be off your head! Why, it will only make the king angry."

"If he's so foolish as to be angry because of such a

trifle, then let him be, I'll plough it anyway."

Strongfist began ploughing the field, and when he had ploughed for a day there was the king glancing out of a palace window. Strongfist ploughed for a second day, and the king began to chafe and to fume. Strongfist ploughed for a third day, and the king appeared before him.

"Who gave you permission to plough here?" asked

he.

"No one. I did it because I wanted to. And how could it be otherwise? So tiny is the plot of land belonging to the ploughman that he'll never be able to feed himself but will die of hunger. And this large field lies idle and you neither plough it yourself nor let anyone else do it."

"What's that to you!" the king replied. "If you

don't put your plough aside of your own free will my soldiers will drive you away from here."

"Do you really think you can frighten me with those soldiers of yours?" Strongfist snapped, and he went

back to his ploughing.

At this the king flew into a towering rage. He summoned three hundred soldiers and bade them drive out Strongfist, but Strongfist took up his iron stick and struck them all down. The king then summoned six hundred soldiers, but Strongfist made short work of them, too. At last the king summoned nine hundred soldiers, but Strongfist took up his iron stick again and did away with the lot. He was about to do the same to the king, but the king began begging him for mercy and even promised to give him his own daughter in marriage if only he spared his life.

"Very well, I agree!" Strongfist cried, well pleased. "I'll finish my ploughing by evening and then you can

send your coach for me."

Evening came, and the king ordered his strongest horses to be harnessed to his best coach and himself went to fetch Strongfist. But no sooner had Strongfist got into the coach with his heavy stick of iron and settled down in the seat than—crash!—the axles broke down. Another coach was sent for but the same thing happened. So then the strongest-built coach the king had was brought and they just managed to drag to the palace in it.

The princess herself met them at the gate. Strongfist got out of the coach, and, coming up to her, asked:

"Well, fairest of maids, will you have me for your husband?"

"I couldn't very well refuse a man so strong and brave, could I!" the princess said. "But there is something I want you to do and you must promise to do it before we are wed."

"Gladly! Anything you wish."

"Then listen to me. Beyond the thrice-three realm there stands a castle surrounded by high, thick walls. In that castle lives my elder sister and the king her husband. They were very happy together for a long time, but one day a terrible misfortune occurred. A devil attacked the castle, seized it and plunged it in such darkness that those living there are deprived of the light of day. Deliver them from the devil's claws, and you and I will be wed at once."

"All right, I suppose I'll have to do that! "Strongfist agreed. "But since I have to go a long way it would be a good thing if the king your father gave me a

horse to ride on."

To this the king readily agreed and gave Strongfist the best horse that could be found in the whole of the realm. Off rode Strongfist at a gallop but halfway to the castle the horse was so worn out that it could take him no farther. There was nothing to be done, so Strongfist stripped a lime-tree of some of its bark, plaited a rope out of it, and, finding a grassy glade, tethered the horse there that it might nibble the grass all it wanted. Then, taking his stick, he went on on foot. He had not gone far, however, when he heard a strange noise coming from another glade. He stopped and listened but could not make out what it was. He came up very close, and, stepping out on to the glade, saw a tiny little man fighting a huge serpent. No sooner did the little man catch sight of Strongfist than

he asked him to help him kill it.

"Gladly!" said Strongfist, and with one blow of his

stick he struck the serpent down, dead.

"Thank you for helping me!" said the tiny little man. "I have nothing I can give you to show my gratitude, but if ever you need me, I'll be there in time to help you."

Off Strongfist went and on and on he walked till he came to the castle where the king languished in dark-

ness under the devil's yoke.

But Strongfist did not attack the devil all at once. He decided to rest after his long journey and pick up

some strength first.

But no rest did he get. For he was just about to sit down when a fearful giant emerged from out of the forest and fell on him like a wild beast. But Strongfist was too quick for him. He snatched up his iron stick and drove the giant to his chest into the ground. The giant cried out at this and begged Strongfist to spare his life, promising to be a friend to him always if he did.

"Since you speak to me of friendship, tell me who

forced you to attack me," said Strongfist.

"What can I say, my friend!" the giant brought out in sorrowful tones. "The devils who dwell in these parts have me in their power and it is they who force me to kill everyone who comes here. I would have been glad to be rid of them if only I could find someone who would help me to do it."

"Good, good! Only tell me how many devils there are and where I can meet them, for my purpose in coming here is to do battle against them and rid the

king's castle of their presence."

"That is not as simple as you may think," said the giant. "You may be able to get the better of the three devils but I am not so sure about the old witch, she may prove to be too much for you. But, anyway, here is a piece of advice: do not get into a fight with the devils too near the castle lest the witch hear you and come running to help them. Hide in this cave for a day. In the evening, when the devil goes prancing home, I'll call him here and you'll do away with him and take away the witch's apple that he always has with him. It is a magic apple: take a bite of it, and you will turn into whoever you wish; take another bite, and you will get back your proper shape again. The best thing to do is to turn into a mosquito. Then you'll be able to get close to the witch and hear what she savs."

Well and good. In the evening there was the devil prancing by on his way to the castle, and the giant waved to him and beckoned him near.

"What do you want?" the devil asked, prancing up to him.

"Someone, a stranger, has got into the cave, and I can do nothing with him. You had better deal with him yourself," said the giant.

"Let him come out, then!" roared the devil angrily. Out came Strongfist, and the devil and he came together and grappled and fought for a long time. At last Strongfist got the better of the devil, he struck him with his iron stick and the devil gave a jerk and another and breathed his last. Strongfist then took a bite of the apple, turned into a mosquito, and, making straight for the castle, flew into the witch's chamber through the keyhole. The witch never saw

Smudgeface did as the old man told him. No sooner had he put the bridle on the horse than—o wonder of wonders!—the horse turned into a beautiful stallion with a gilded saddle. All one had to do was jump on his back and ride off at a gallop!

And that was just what Smudgeface did. He galloped to the place where he had met the other sons-inlaw the night before, and, tying the horse to a tree,

took out some food and began to eat.

The sons-in-law came out of the forest and said:

"Now, what sort of man are you! All you do is eat and never want to do a stroke of work. Look at us! We've been wandering in the forest the whole day long and are coming back with nothing to show for it."

Said Smudgeface in reply:

"Wait a minute, I'll come with you, I'll only run into the forest for a moment."

He ran into the forest, untied the stallion, and, jumping into the saddle, came galloping back again.

The sons-in-law were thunderstruck.

"Where did you catch him?" asked they.

Said Smudgeface in reply:

"He who looks hard enough is sure to find what he is looking for."

"Well, we looked and never found him."

"You didn't look hard enough."

Now the sons-in-law began to bargain with him.

"Sell us your horse!" said they.

"I don't mind if you pay me well for him."

"How much do you want?"

"Oh, not so very much. Nothing but a signet-ring." The middle son-in-law began offering him a large

sum of money, but Smudgeface would have none of it and insisted on the ring.

The middle son-in-law gave him the ring, and, getting the horse in return, took him to the king who rewarded him royally.

On the following day the king said to the sons-in-law:

"There is a huge bear living in the forest who does much harm. He who kills him will get a sack of gold. Prove to me that you are indeed the brave lads I think you and kill the bear for me!"

Early the next morning they set out for the forest again, and only Smudgeface was in no hurry and slept and snored till it was almost noon. It was his wife who finally roused him and sent him in search of the bear.

Smudgeface came into the forest and called out three times:

"I am here, Grandpa! I am here, I am here!"

The same moment the old man appeared.

"Well, now, have you come to kill the bear?" asked he. "So I have," said Smudgeface in reply. "But how will I do it?"

"I'll tell you how. It's still early, the bear is wandering about in the forest and is hard to find. Wait until noon when he will wander into a thicket for a rest and then kill him. Now, in order to do this creep up closer to him, strike him on the muzzle with a stake and then move aside quickly, and if he rushes out at you, look sharp and hide from him in the brush. You won't have to strike the bear a second time, for your first blow will have been enough to finish him. When you see that he has breathed his last, skin him and take the skin to the king."

Smudgeface did as the old man told him to. He found the bear, killed and skinned him and then came out on to the road to wait for the other sons-in-law. He sat down by the wayside and took out some food, and he was still eating when they appeared. Coming closer, they stood round him and laughed.

"Is it that you have killed the bear that you've

worked up such an appetite? "asked they.

"Of course I've killed him!" said Smudgeface. And he brought out the bearskin to prove it, for they would not believe him otherwise.

The sons-in-law began to bargain with him.

"Sell us the bearskin," said they.

"I don't mind."

"How much are you asking?"

"All I want is for the youngest of you to let me pierce his ear."

At this the youngest of the sons-in-law said, displeased:

"Stop these silly jests of yours! What good will it do you if I have a hole in my ear? Better take some money."

But Smudgeface would have none of it.

"It's up to you!" said he. "The bearskin is mine, and the ear is yours."

There was nothing to be done, and as the youngest of the sons-in-law was very eager to have the bearskin, he let his ear be pierced. In return, he got the skin and took it to the king who gave him a sack of gold in reward.

Soon after that the king held a great feast to which he invited the kings of all the neighbouring lands and all his sons-in-law with the exception of Smudgeface. "Why should I invite him!" said he. "He has done

nothing to deserve it."

The other sons-in-law went to the feast but Smudgeface made off for the forest. There he met the old man who asked him:

"What has happened, my son? Why do you frown?

Are you angry at anyone?"

Said Smudgeface in reply:

"I am angry at my own self. Why did I catch the bird, the horse and the bear only to give them up to the other sons-in-law! It was very foolish of me. Now the king thinks that they are heroes and I am a good-for-nothing. Why, he did not even invite me to the feast!"

Said the old man in soothing tones:

"Don't you grieve, you'll be at the feast, too. Here is a pea for you. Eat it, and you'll turn into whosoever you choose and will be able to go wher-

ever you please."

Smudgeface thanked the old man for his kindness and went home. He swallowed the pea, and, turning into a flea, slipped into the feast hall where all the king's guests were gathered. There he saw the three sons-in-law and heard them boasting, the youngest saying that he had killed the bear, the middle one, that he had caught the magic horse, and the oldest one, that he had snared the white bird.

Smudgeface returned to his room, changed back into his proper shape again, and, dressing himself up

in festive garb, rejoined the guests.

The sons-in-law were much surprised to see him. And Smudgeface spoke up right in front of everyone and said:

"You have turned out to be such braggarts that I cannot keep back the truth any longer. Let everyone know that it was I and not you who caught the bird and the horse and killed the bear."

At this the sons-in-law raised a great hullabaloo, shouting, all three of them together:

"Lies! Lies! Lies!"

And they called in the servants and bade them throw Smudgeface in a dungeon.

But Smudgeface brought out from his pocket the

piece of finger and the signet-ring and said:

"This is what I got from these knaves in return for the bird and the horse, and as for the bearskin, the younger son-in-law let me pierce his ear to pay me for it."

The sons-in-law, seeing that they were shown up for what they were, left the feast in disgrace, and the guests surrounded Smudgeface and began praising him. And as for the king, he was now full of such respect for him that he proclaimed him his heir.

At the king's death Smudgeface became king in his stead and must be reigning over the kingdom still if he

is alive.





THE WISE COUNSELLOR

One day a poor youth was walking along a road. Feeling tired, he sat down on the grass by a large stone to rest and have a bite to eat. After he had eaten he stretched himsef out on the ground and fell asleep.

In his sleep he had a strange dream: he seemed to hear a squeaky little voice piping something in his ear. But the piping did not stop when he woke. By the

sound of it he judged that it came from under the stone if not from somewhere within it.

The youth put his ear to the stone and found that that was where the piping was indeed coming from! He listened carefully and was gradually able to make out the words:

"O good and kind youth! Please deliver me from my long and trying captivity! For seven hundred years have I been suffering the most terrible torture but my captors won't let me die. You were born at sunrise on Easter day, therefore you alone can save me."

"I don't know if it is in my power to do so," replied the youth hesitantly. "Tell me how you have come to be where you are and what I must do in order to

rescue you."

Said the squeaky little voice:

"First you must find a rowan-tree that grows on the border of three farms and cut off a piece of its branch a finger thick and an inch long. After that you must take several bunches of savory and of caraway, burn them and the rowan branch together, and, walking round the stone nine times, with your face to the sun, let the smoke curl over the whole of it. Only then will the gate of my prison open and I will see the sun again and feel the breath of the wind. If you save me my gratitude will know no bounds: I will make you rich and famous."

The youth thought this over and said:

"To help someone who is in trouble is every man's duty. Although I don't yet know whether you are a good or an evil spirit, I will try to do what I can for you. But first you must swear that, once you are free, you will do no one any harm."

To this the captive readily agreed, vowing on his

honour to keep his word.

The youth then went off to the forest in search of the rowan-tree and the herbs. Fortunately, he knew of a place nearby where a rowan-tree grew on the border of three farms but it took him much longer to find the herbs and he was only back with them on the following day.

It was after sunset of that day that he set about his task, going round the stone nine times, with his face to the sun, and being careful to let the smoke curl

over its whole surface.

He was nearly done when there came the most terrible noise, it was as if the earth itself were being rent asunder. The same instant the huge stone moved from its place and rose in the air to a height of twenty feet and a tiny little man sprang from under it and rushed off on twinkling feet. Then the stone crashed down again in its old place, spraying everything around with earth and dust.

The tiny little man ran back to his deliverer and threw himself on his neck. He even tried kissing his hands and feet, but this the youth would not let him do. Then they both dropped down on the grass beside the stone, and the little man told the youth the follow-

ing story:

"I was once a magician and a famous one who did much good to many and was richly rewarded for it. I healed the sick, both men and animals, and broke the evil spells cast over people by witches and sorcerers who feared me because I was stronger than they. Many a time did they get together and try to think of ways of doing away with me, but by means of the secret knowledge that I possessed I was able to upset

their wily plans and they could do me no harm.

"At last they collected a large sum of money and sent a messenger with it to an evil sorcerer who lived in a northern land, calling on him to help them. It was this knave who finally got the better of me, though not so much by wisdom as by cunning. He stole my tools of magic and threw me in a dark hole under the stone to languish there till the day when a man born at sunrise on Easter day should come and free me. For seven hundred years I waited for that happy moment. Then you came, and, heeding my plea, delivered me from captivity. To the end of my days I shall not tire of thanking you and will serve you selflessly, giving all my strength and knowledge to making you happy and to raising you to the greatest height a mortal can reach on earth. When I have done this, I will ask you to help me again that I might square my accounts with my enemies should they appear. Until then, lest my enemies learn of my escape, I will hide myself from all eyes. By means of magic I can take any shape I please. Thus, I can turn myself into a flea and shelter in the pocket of your breeches. But if ever you need my help and advice I will scramble out of your pocket, jump behind your ear and tell you what to do. I won't want any food, for I have done without all the seven hundred years I spent under the stone, and fresh air and sunshine are enough for me. And now let us sleep, for in the morning we will set out together to seek our fortune."

The kind spirit or sorcerer or whoever he was had now come to the end of his story, and the youth had

his supper and lay down for a sleep.

On the following morning, rising late, when the sun was already high in the sky, he looked around him, but the little man whom he had rescued the night before was nowhere to be seen. Half awake as he was, the youth was not sure whether he had really seen him or whether it had all been a dream.

He had his breakfast and was about to start on his way again when three wayfarers appeared on the road. Judging by their clothes, they were artisans, and there were leather bags strapped on to their backs. Just then the youth felt a tickling behind his ear and a voice as thin as the piping of a mosquito said:

"Invite the three wayfarers to stop for a rest and

ask them where they are bound."

The youth now saw that his adventure of the night before had not been a dream. He recalled that the little man had said that he would hide in his pocket and only emerge if his deliverer needed his counsel.

The youth came up to the three men and in the most friendly fashion invited them to sit down and rest, saying that he would go with them if they happened to be going the same way as he. The three, who turned out to be apprentices, told him of a terrible misfortune that had occurred in the king's own city several days before: the king's daughter, his only child, had drowned while bathing, and though the river was not at all deep, her body had not been found.

Suddenly the youth heard the voice behind his ear whisper to him:

"Go wherever they are going, for you might make

your fortune there."

The youth heeded this counsel and went with the

apprentices.

The road soon led them into a dense pine forest where, lying in a gutter by the wayside, was an old knapsack.

The voice behind the youth's ear whispered:

"Take that old knapsack, it might come in handy on

the way."

Though the youth was doubtful that anything so old and worn could be of any possible use, he picked up the knapsack and hung it on his back, saying with a laugh:

"A man must not disdain that which he finds lying in the road. Who knows but that this old knapsack

may be of use to us! "

His companions scoffed at this but said:

"If you want to take it, go ahead. An empty knapsack is not so heavy that it will weigh down your shoulders."

However, they soon changed their tune when they saw that the knapsack was no ordinary knapsack but

a magic one.

Walking in the hot midday sun had wearied the travellers, and, seating themselves in the shade of a leafy tree, they were about to refresh themselves with the little they had brought along, when the little man hiding behind the youth's ear said to him:

"Order the knapsack to bring you food!"

The youth, who thought this a jest but decided that it might amuse his companions, took the knapsack off his back, put it on the grass in front of him, rapped it with a stick and said:

"Knapsack, knapsack, bring us some food!"

At this something quite unheard of happened. There before them, where the knapsack had just been, now stood a small table spread with a white cloth and stacked with food and drink. Four spoons lay beside the platters and bowls which contained such delectable dishes as a thick beef broth, roast pork, sausages and pies made of the finest, whitest flour that ever was. And there was enough beer, wine and mead in the jugs to quench anyone's thirst!

The travellers did not wait to be asked but set to in earnest. It was as if they were at a wedding feast, for never before in their lives had they eaten anything so

delicious!

When everyone had had his fill, the table vanished as suddenly as it had appeared and the old knapsack

again lay in its place.

If at first the three apprentices had jeered at the youth for having taken it with him they now vied with each other for the right to carry the knapsack. In fact, they were close to quarrelling over it when the youth stopped them by saying:

"I was the one to pick it up, so it's mine by rights."

There was nothing to be said to that, so they left it to him. But since it was unthinkable to allow this treasured possession to simply dangle on his back, unprotected, one of the apprentices brought out a needle and a ball of silk thread from his bag and made a cover for the knapsack out of a piece of sacking.

After a rest the travellers went on. A full stomach and a hopeful heart are the merriest of companions, and it was not to be wondered at that the four of

them walked along singing and joking.

With the onset of evening they found shelter for the night under a bush and the knapsack provided them with as fine a meal as it had at midday. Before going to bed they thought long about how to protect it from thieves, deciding at last that they would all rest their heads on it whilst keeping their legs stretched out in four different directions: the first, to the south, the second, to the north, the third, to the east, and the fourth, to the west. As if this were not enough, its owner tied the knapsack to one end of his belt and his left hand to the other end that none might pull at it however lightly without his feeling it. But though better ways of safeguarding the knapsack could hardly be devised, the four young men slept fitfully, and whenever they woke, which was often, would grope for the knapsack to make sure it was still there.

In the morning the knapsack brought them food again and they had a hearty breakfast, and this went on every day for a week by which time they had

arrived at the king's city.

Here the little man who was still sitting behind his deliverer's ear, told him that the princess had not been drowned at all but dragged into a whirlpool by a wicked mermaid. He promised to show him the way to the place where she was being held captive, saying that before anything else he was to go to the king and announce that he would go in search of the princess and try to find her no matter what it cost him, but that if he did not return the king was to send one half of the gold due him by way of reward to his parents and distribute the rest among the poor.

The king, who had lost all hope of ever seeing his daughter again, gladly agreed, saying that he would do

everything the youth asked him.

The youth left the palace, and the little man behind his ear piped:

"You must catch three crayfish, they will show you

the way."

And, of course, the youth heeded this counsel and did as he was told.

On the following day the townsfolk flocked to the river bank where he was to begin his search for the princess. The king came, too, for he wanted to see for himself what the brave youth would do, and he ordered the princess's servant-maids who had witnessed the whole terrible happening to point out the spot where they had seen her last. The servant-maids did so, and now it became clear again to everyone that it was practically impossible to drown there, the river being no more than three feet deep, with a level bottom and a weak current. True, there was a deep hole much farther down the river, but how could the princess have come to be that far? Surely, black magic had been at work here!

"Let one of the crayfish down into the water without anyone noticing and see where it crawls," the

little man piped in the youth's ear.

The youth hastened to do as he was told. Pretending that he wanted to measure the river depth with his hand, he dropped one of the crayfish in the water. The crayfish crawled alongside the shore for twenty paces or so and then turned sharply left and disappeared under an overhanging cliff.

When the second and the third crayfish had done

the same, the little man piped:

"Now that we know where to go there is no time to be lost. Strike the shore three times with the heel of your left foot and dive in the river. Once there, we'll find the way."

The youth did as he was told. He struck the shore three times with his foot and dived in so that the water all around rippled and foamed. The lookers-on waited silently to see what would happen next.

Reaching the spot underwater directly beneath the cliff, the youth saw an opening that led into a cave, and so narrow was it that to squeeze in was almost more than a man could do.

"Into the cave with you!" the little man cried.

The youth crawled in with difficulty, but as he pushed ahead the walls fell back and he was soon able to stand up.

After a while a faint light gleamed in the darkness, and the youth stepped out of the cave to see a broad grass-grown valley spreading before him with a large house of blue stone showing in the distance.

Said the little man:

"Listen carefully to all I'm going to say and do just what I tell you, for you will never rescue the princess otherwise. She is being held captive by a mermaid in that blue house yonder, and two bears stand on watch by the gate day and night to prevent anyone from getting in or out. We must try and make friends with the bears. As soon as we come near, order your knapsack to turn into a hive full of honey and then thrust it at them and slip into the house. Once we are inside, I'll tell you what to do next."

The youth came up to the gate, he heard the bears roaring and was filled with fear. And when he had peeped through a crack and caught sight of them, his heart was in his heels. Still, he took the knapsack down from his back and ordered it to turn into a hive full of honey. So heavy was the hive that he could not even lift it, but the bears, feeling the smell of the honey, threw the gate wide open and rushed greedily toward it. They never saw the youth who slipped into the yard behind their backs, and, the door not being locked, made his way into the house.

Said the little man:

"There are two doors here, one on your left and one on your right. The one on the left has a golden key in it and the one on the right, a silver one. First, you must lock the door with the golden key, so the old mermaid will not be able to come out, and then unlock the door with the silver key and let out the princess."

The youth did as he was told. He locked the door with the golden key, and such a terrible roar came from the room that the very walls shook. But he never paused and hurried to the door with the silver key. Unlocking it, he saw the princess who was sitting on her couch with a sorrowful look on her face. The sight of him frightened her at first, but when he told her that he had come to free her she was overjoyed and jumped gaily down to the floor.

Said the youth:

"There is no time to be lost. We must get out of here before the bears have eaten all of the honey."

And taking the princess by the hand, he led her to the door. The bears, still busy with the hive which they had rolled into the yard, paid them no heed, and the runaways tiptoed past them noiselessly and ran out through the gate. The youth then locked it so that the bears might not rush out after them, and the two hurried on.

"Tell the knapsack to come back to you!" the little man piped in his ear.

"Knapsack, knapsack, come back to me!" called the

youth.

And the same instant the knapsack was back in its place on his back again.

They came to the cave, and the youth said to the

princess:

"The cave is dark and narrow, but don't be afraid, for we will be out of it in a little while. As soon as we are in the water, shut your eyes and don't open them until I have carried you out on shore."

The underground passage was now far wider than it had been before for some reason, and the runaways made their way through it quite easily. When they got to the river the youth took the princess up in his arms and carried her out on to the shore.

Losing all hope of his ever returning, most of the people who had been there had gone off home. But the king and his courtiers were still sitting by the river and talking about the princess and the terrible fate that had overtaken her when her head and that of her deliverer suddenly bobbed up out of the water.

When they saw the princess alive and well, the happiness of the king and those who were with him knew no bounds. The king kept embracing now his daughter, now her deliverer and weeping for joy.

The glad tidings flew as fast as the wind, and the townsfolk flocked to the river-bank in their thousands

to see the miracle for themselves.

By order of the king, the youth was given chambers of his own in the palace and his reward was trebled.

In the evening, when the youth was about to go to bed, the little man piped in his ear:

"Now that you have become rich, there is no need for us to tarry here. In two or three days we must be on our way again. I have no doubt but that the king would have given you his daughter in marriage in time, but I don't think you should marry just yet, you are far too young. Come with me and let us roam the wide world until you have grown older and wiser."

The youth did not much care for this bit of advice, but remembering that all of the little man's counsels had done him nothing but good, decided to do as he was told. The king and the princess begged him to stay with them longer, but he would not and prepared to set off on his way again.

The youth was rich now and could well afford to ride in a coach. But as he was in no haste to get to any particular place and as the magic knapsack provided him daily with all the food he could eat, he continued his journey on foot.

One day, stopping for a rest, he again felt a tickling behind his ear and heard the little man's squeaky little voice say to him:

"Some of the townsfolk are after you, they want to rob you of your knapsack. It was the three apprentices who travelled with you that let the cat out of the bag. Now, what you must do is take a thick cudgel of pine of a length to fit into your knapsack, bore a hole in it at one end and then fill the hole with molten lead. Armed with this, you will be well able to defend yourself from your enemies!"

The youth did as the little man told him and thrust the cudgel into his knapsack.

On the following day, as he was passing through a thick forest, he was set on quite suddenly by ten men. Said the little man in a whisper:

"Tell the cudgel to jump out of the knapsack!"

This the youth did, and at once the most wonderful thing happened, for the cudgel came alive, and, jumping out of the knapsack, fell on the robbers and began beating them about the shoulders so hard that they took to their heels.

Once of a fine summer evening the youth came to a large village where a fête was being held, some of the younger people singing songs and swinging on swings and others dancing away on the green to the strains of a bagpipe.

Suddenly the youth, who had been admiring the merry scene before him, heard the little man behind

his ear whisper:

"We have come here at a lucky hour, for the villain I have been seeking is here. If my plan comes off, and it is bound to if you go about things properly, he will be in my hands today and I will be able to square my accounts with him at last. Take a good look at the dancers, and you will see among them a girl who has a bright ribbon round her neck. Invite this girl to dance with you, and as you are spinning her round, seize the ribbon and give it a mighty pull so that it rips into shreds. Nothing will happen to the girl: she has nine lives, like a cat." The youth at once drew nearer to the dancers and began to look for the girl with the ribbon round her neck. He soon saw her. She was tall and her hair curled prettily, and there was a crowd of young men around her, all vying with each other for the right to dance with her.

Just as she and her partner had wound up their dance, the youth came up and invited her to dance with him. He spun her round very fast, seized her ribbon and gave it such a pull that it ripped into shreds! With a heart-rending scream the girl vanished.

Alarmed by the scream, the dancers and those who stood around watching them turned and saw a man with a funny grey beard running as fast as his legs could carry him for the forest, with another and taller man close at his heels. By then it had grown quite dark, the two men were soon lost to sight, and the merrymaking was resumed just as if nothing out of the way had happened.

The youth stood watching the dancers for a time and then moved on to try and find himself a place

where he could spend the night.

As he was nearing the village, he heard quick footsteps behind him. Glancing over his shoulder, he saw

a man hurrying after him.

"Wait for me, my lad!" cried he. "I am coming with you, for I am still in your debt. Don't you know me now that I am tall and strong again? Not only did you free me from captivity but, too, delivered my worst enemy into my hands. Now there is no further need for me to hide in your pocket."

And the little man or, as we will now call him, the good magician, told the youth that he had caught and bound his enemy and that he would never be able to escape, for all his magic powers had gone with the ribbon which had not been a ribbon at all but a live snake. He said that he was going to take a cudgel and beat his enemy with it until he disclosed to him where it was he kept the three princesses and all their

him nor felt his presence, but she sat there troubled, mumbling to herself:

"Say what you will, but someone must have fallen on my husband and done him to death or he would have been home long before now!"

Said the little devils, trying to comfort her:

"Do not be grieved! Father must just have been held up on the way."

"No, that cannot be! He must be dead and gone. If only I knew who killed him I'd have gobbled him up alive!"

After a while Strongfist flew back to the giant, took a bite of the apple, and, getting back his proper shape again, told him what he had heard in the witch's chamber.

"Good!" said the giant. "What we must do now is get the better of those two other devils. After that we'll deal with the witch and find a way of tricking her."

On the next evening the second devil went prancing by on his way to the castle, and the giant waved to him and beckoned him near.

"What do you want?" the devil asked, prancing up to him.

"Someone, a stranger, has got into the cave and I can do nothing with him. You'd better deal with him yourself."

"Where is he? Let him climb out of there!" roared the devil.

Out came Strongfist, and the two of them came together and grappled and fought for a long time. At last Strongfist got the better of the devil and struck him with his iron stick, and the devil gave a jerk and another and breathed his last.

On the third evening the third devil went prancing by, and the giant waved to him and beckoned him near.

"What do you want?" the devil asked.

"Someone, a stranger, has got into the cave and I can do nothing with him. You'd better deal with him yourself!"

"Where is he? Let him climb out of there!" roared the devil.

Out came Strongfist and they grappled and fought together for a long time till at last Strongfist got the better of the devil. He struck him with his iron stick, and the devil gave a jerk and another and breathed his last.

"Well, that's that!" said the giant. "Now it's time for me to do my bit. I must get us a good pair of pincers and some nails first. Then, while you hide in the cave, I'll go to the witch whose trusted servant I am and tell her that all the three devils are dead, killed by a giant so strong that neither she nor anyone else can get the better of him. She'll ask me what I think she should do and I will tell her to creep up quietly to the cave and lick a hole in the rock big enough for her to thrust her tongue through. I will explain to her that the giant will want to see what it is and that as soon as he grasps her tongue she will be able to swallow him. The witch will believe me, I know. But mind that you don't touch her tongue with your bare hands. Seize it with the pincers and hold it fast, and I'll come running and—rap! tap!—nail it to the rock. The witch will then be forced to stay in the cave and will languish there for ever and the little devils with her, for we'll drive them into it, too. And the darkness cloaking the castle will vanish and descend on the cave instead."

As the giant said so it was. No sooner had the witch thrust her tongue in through the hole than Strongfist seized it with the pincers and the giant nailed it to the rock. After that they drove the little devils into the cave, the darkness enveloping the castle vanished, and it sparkled and shone like a great nugget of gold.

The king was overjoyed and did not know how to repay Strongfist for all he had done, but Strongfist would take nothing from him, saying:

"I am not one to accept payment from my kin. I only delivered you from the devils because I wanted your wife's sister to marry me."

At this the king and queen were more pleased than ever, for to have someone so brave and strong for a kinsman was nothing if not enviable.

On the third day Strongfist prepared to leave for home where his bride awaited him, and they all went to see him off and promised to attend his wedding.

Off went Strongfist, and the selfsame giant met him on the wav.

"I want to thank you for helping me to rid myself of the witch and the devils, "said he. "Now I am free. But I helped you, too, so you must give me the witch's apple in reward."

"Why not?" Strongfist replied. "Only I don't feel like going on foot any further. If you fetch me a cart that will carry me through the air to my bride I'll let you have the apple."

"Just bide here a bit, and you'll have it in no time!"

The giant soon brought the cart and gave it to Strongfist, and Strongfist let him have the apple in return.

Off went Strongfist in the cart, sailing through the air, and before he could count to two there he was in the forest glade where he had tethered his horse. The horse had eaten its fill and was waiting for him, but Strongfist decided not to go on just yet.

"I'm dead weary," said he to himself. "I think I'll lie down here and sleep for a spell. I'll get me home

in time in any case."

Down he lay and fell asleep, and while he slept the giant decided that he needed his cart for himself and rushed off after him. Seeing Strongfist lying there fast asleep, he fell on him and killed him and took away the cart.

Strongfist lay there for a day and he lay there for a night, and in the morning the tiny little man whom Strongfist had saved from the serpent appeared. He put a magic salve on Strongfist's wounds, brought him back to life and told him of all that had happened to him while he slept. Strongfist thanked him not once but a hundred times, and then, jumping on his horse's back, rode off in all haste for his bride's house.

Soon after that Strongfist and the princess were married and held a wedding feast, and all the people who had been kept in the castle by the devils and freed by Strongfist attended it. Strongfist's mother and father came, too, and they all feasted and made merry for nine days and nine nights on end.

And when the old king died Strongfist became king in his stead.



THE THREE MAGIC THINGS

There was once a man who had three sons, two of them clever young men and the third, the youngest, a fool. Past the man's farm there ran a wide river, and the sons had to ferry people across it.

One day a stranger came up to the eldest son.

"Take me across the river!" said he. Well and good, and the eldest son did so. "What would you like to have in reward," asked the man when they reached the opposite shore, "a bag of gold or three magic things?"

"A bag of gold," said the eldest son.

"Very well!" said the man, and, giving him a bag of gold, vanished.

On the second night the same thing happened to the

middle son and he, too, chose the bag of gold.

On the third night it was the fool's turn to be ferryman, and the same man came up to him and asked to be taken across.

Well and good, and the fool did so.

"What would you like to have in reward, fool," asked the man when they reached the opposite shore, "a bag of gold or three magic things?"

"What's a bag of gold! I think I'll have three magic

things."

"Will you now? It looks like you're cleverer than the other two. Here is the first magic thing—a horse hair. Put it between your lips and say, 'I want to be a horse and nothing but a horse! 'and you'll turn into a horse. Here is the second magic thing—a pigeon feather. Put it between your lips and say, 'I want to be a pigeon and nothing but a pigeon! 'and you'll turn into a pigeon. And here is the third magic thing—a fish scale. Put it between your lips and say, 'I want to be a fish and nothing but a fish! 'and you'll turn into a fish. And if you want to become a man again, put the hair or the feather or the scale, as the case may be, between your lips and say, 'I want to be a man and nothing but a man! 'and you'll get back your proper shape."

And having said this, the stranger vanished just as

if the earth had swallowed him.

As for the fool, he at once turned himself into a fish, swam across the river, and, getting back his proper shape again, went off to roam the wide world.

He walked and he walked and he reached a forest so dense and thick that he could not so much as think of making his way through it. But this in no way grieved the fool. He turned into a pigeon and flew over the forest. On and on he flew till he saw a field, and so large was it that you could not see from one end of it to another. But the fool at once changed himself into a horse and before one could count to two had galloped across the field and reached a palace that stood just beyond it.

What was he to do next? He thought about it and decided to take up service with the king. This he did, and soon after the king set out to pay another king a visit and took the fool with him. Now, this other king had a daughter as lovely as a sun-beam and as playful and gay as a forest brook. A joy to behold was she, and the fool fell in love with her at sight and did not know what to do about it, for who would give a princess in marriage to a poor man!

One day, evil tidings reached the ear of the king in whose service the fool was: his lands had been overrun and were being plundered. The king turned white as a sheet and prepared to set off for home at once to try and save whatever he could.

Said the second king:

"You must not go alone, for you can never tell what you may be up against. I will come with you and help you in your trouble."

They reached the first king's realm and when they

saw what was taking place there and the size and strength of the enemy host they knew that they could not hope to rout it.

"It's a pity I haven't my large sword with me," said the second king, "for if I had I'd have ground their whole accursed host to dust singlehanded. The point is how to get the sword here in time—the way is far too long. If only someone could fetch it before morning I'd give him my own daughter in marriage, and welcome."

The fool heard about it and at once rushed off after the sword. He never spared himself but went as fast as he could—in the guise of a horse wherever there were roads, in the guise of a pigeon when there were none and in the guise of a fish when there were rivers to swim across. He put all of his strength into it and reached the palace at last, and he was quite out of breath as he ran into the princess's chamber.

"Let me have your father's large sword!" cried he.

"He must have it by morning."

"By morning?" asked the princess, surprised. "You'll never get there in time, the way is far too

long."

"I'll hear none of that talk! How do you know how I'm going to go about it? I'll gallop in the guise of a horse, I'll fly in the guise of a pigeon, I'll swim in the guise of a fish, and I swear I'll get there before night."

But the princess would not believe him, for how could a man gallop like a horse, fly like a pigeon and

swim like a fish!

"Well, then, watch! I haven't time enough for this,

but what can I do with a stubborn lass like you! "the fool exclaimed, and he turned into a horse.

Said the horse to the princess in pleading tones:

"Please, my sweet lass, pluck three hairs out of my

mane and hide them in a safe place."

The princess did as she was asked, she looked, and what did she see but the horse turn back into the fool again and the fool into a pigeon.

Said the pigeon to her in pleading tones:

"Please, my sweet lass, pluck three feathers from

one of my wings and hide them in a safe place."

The princess did as she was asked, she looked and what did she see but the pigeon turn back into the fool again and the fool into a fish.

Said the fish to her in pleading tones:

"Please, my sweet lass, scrape three scales from off

my tail and hide them in a safe place."

The princess did as she was asked, and the fool got back his own shape again. He took the sword and was about to set out on his way when the princess stopped him, saying:

"Whoever can work such miracles is no ordinary man. I have wanted someone like that for a husband

for a long time, and I've met him at last! "

"Good!" the fool returned. "I have been trying to win a bride as lovely as you are for a long time, too."

And having hastily made plans about their wed-

ding, they parted.

One-two! —and the fool galloped across fields in the guise of a horse, flew over forests in the guise of a pigeon and swam rivers in the guise of a fish, and before dark had descended the large sword was in the first king's palace. Now, there was no one there at the time, everyone having gone off to guard the borders, but the cook who was as crafty a fellow as they come.

Said the cook, pretending to be very simple and

trusting:

"You've brought the sword, it's true, but who ever can lift anything so heavy! With the little strength I have, I don't suppose I could even lift the scabbard."

"How can you tell before you've tried!" said the

fool with a laugh.

And the cook, evil man that he was, snatched up the sword, cut off the fool's head with it, dragged the fool behind some bushes, and, running to the second king, told him that it was he who had fetched the sword. The king was very pleased, telling him that he was a brave and a clever man and that he would be glad to have him for a son-in-law, and at once set to and began wielding the sword. And before one could count to two the enemy host was wiped out to a man!

There was no end to the friends' joy, and on the next day the second king set off for home, taking the cook whom he called his own dear son-in-law with him.

As for the fool, he lay still and dead behind the bushes when the very same man whom he had once ferried across the river happened to be passing by there. Seeing the fool stretched out on the ground, he at once sent a raven to fetch him some living water, and—lo and behold!—brought the fool back to life again. He shook his finger at him then and scolded him, saying:

"Oh, what a fool you are! Why did you give up

your sword to that trickster of a cook? Make haste and be off now, gallop in the guise of a horse, fly in the guise of a pigeon, swim in the guise of a fish, and get to your promised bride before evening, for if you don't they will marry her to the cook instead of to you."

It was only then that the fool realised what a simpleton he had been and rushed off at once in great alarm.

One-two!—and there he was by the second king's palace. He came inside, and there was merrymaking there, and everyone was dressed in his finest clothes, and only the bride sat there with hanging head. She did not see the fool at first, but he waved to her and she saw him and hastened to his side.

The fool told them his story, and the second king, though he noticed that the cook had turned pale, listened and could not believe his own ears. Then the princess spoke up and she said to the cook:

"If you are my promised husband, as you say, then

turn into a horse, a pigeon and a fish! "

A droll request if there ever was one! All the guests waited, round-eyed, to see what would happen next, and the cook furrowed his brow and said in whining tones:

"You are only poking fun at me. Who ever is up to such a thing!"

"There is such a one!" said the princess, interrupt-

ing him. "And he is no trickster like yourself."

The fool turned into a horse, and the princess put the three hairs she had plucked out of it to his mane and they grew fast to it. The fool turned into a pigeon, and the princess put the three feathers she had plucked out of it to its wing and they grew fast to it. The fool turned into a fish, and the princess put the three scales she had scraped off it to its tail and they grew fast to it, too.

Everyone now knew the cook for the swindler that he was and they put him to death then and there. And as for the fool, he married the princess and lived happily ever after.





THE LORD WHO BECAME A BLACKSMITH

Once a lord was journeying to a certain place on business. On the way his coach broke down. Luckily, there happened to be a smithy nearby, so the lord ordered the coach to be repaired without delay. That was all right with the blacksmith who went to work at once and was done before you could count to two. He asked a ruble in payment, and the lord gave it him, for he could not very well do anything else, but the

sum seeming much too high to him, became very angry. He rode home and he muttered half under his breath:

"To take a whole ruble for such a trifle! ... All he did was take off the thing, heat it, give a knock on it here and another there, cool it and put it back again. Work? Bah! A mere nothing, and he gets a ruble for it! Why, that blacksmith must take in more money than I, a lord! Come to think of it, I could be doing what he does just as well and lining my pockets. Now, wait a minute, why don't I watch him for a spell and then take over his job and drive him out of his shop altogether at the end of summer!"

So the lord began visiting the smithy regularly and watching the blacksmith at work. It all seemed simple as pie to him and after a while he felt that he had mastered the trade and knew all there was to know about it. He drove out the blacksmith, set his coachman to fanning the flame with a bellows, and himself took up a hammer—come up, good folk, and the lord will forge whatever it is you want him to forge!

Soon a farmer came from a neighbouring village, bringing a piece of iron and asking for a ploughshare to be forged out of it.

The lord glanced at him with an air of importance, took the piece of iron, thrust it in the forge, and, putting some coals on top, called to the coachman:

"Hey, there, look sharp and blow the fire!"

The poor coachman did as he was told and set to with all his strength. When the piece of iron had been heated to white heat, the lord flung it on the anvil and turned to the farmer.

"You, there, hammer away at it and be quick about it!" cried he.

The farmer picked up the blacksmith's big, heavy hammer and began hammering at the iron so hard that the sparks flew. And the lord took a small hammer and joined him. The big hammer went "Wham!" and the small one "Clank-clank!", the big hammer went "Wham!" and the small one "Clank-clank!" again, and the sound of it carried all over the neighbourhood, just the way it used to when the blacksmith had been in the shop.

The farmer looked and he saw that the iron had cooled and turned dark but there was no ploughshare to show for it. But the lord never turned a hair. He thrust the iron back in the forge and ordered the coachman to blow the fire, and as soon as the iron was hot again flung it on the anvil. They hammered away again, the two of them, and the iron began to wear thin.

Said the farmer:

"We'll spoil the piece at this rate and all for nothing!"

"What do you know about it, you fool!" the lord told him. "Come, coachman, take the hammer from him and beat away with it hard!"

The coachman set to work, he and the lord went at the piece of iron with their hammers, but though they made a great din and racket there was no ploughshare to show for it. They went on with it for a while and then the lord said to the farmer:

"I've never seen such poor iron as yours! A ploughshare will never come out of it, but I'll forge you an axe instead."

This did not make the farmer any too happy, but what could he do!

"Oh, all right, let it be so," said he. "I can always use an extra axe."

They began heating the iron and forging it again, and there was less and less of it every moment. The lord saw that though they were making a great din and racket there would be no axe to show for it.

"This is very poor iron indeed!" said he. "No axe will come out of it, but I'll forge you a knife instead."

"Oh, all right," the farmer agreed. "A knife will come in handy, too."

They began heating and forging the iron again, and hammered away at it, but though they made a great din and racket, there was no knife to show for it.

Said the lord to the farmer:

"I've never seen such poor iron as this! No knife will come out of it, but I'll forge you a sizz instead."

"Oh, all right, then!" said the farmer and he glanced at the lord, but what he was thinking the lord never knew.

They began forging the iron again, but there was only a little bit of it left now and even less by the time they were through with it. The lord took it out of the forge and threw it in a tub of water. There was a—s-s-siz!—and the tiny burning bit darkened.

Said the lord to the farmer:

"That was a fine sizz, and at least we haven't worked in vain. That'll be a ruble, my good fellow!"

"I haven't one, " said the farmer. "But I do have some fine wheat at home. Come to see me, Your Honour, and I'll pay you as you deserve!"

Off rode the farmer, and the lord, impatient to get

what he had earned, at once ordered his coach to be brought round and drove after him.

Said he to his coachman on the way:

"I'll take the sack and go into the storeroom myself, for I know how much is owing me. The farmer will start filling the sack and you lend an ear and listen. When you hear him say 'That's enough', shout as loud as you can, 'No, it's not! Let him have my share, too!'"

And so that was the way they settled it.

They came to the farmer's house, and the farmer led the lord to the storeroom where he had two strong, brawny youths lying in wait for him. The moment the lord came in the youths seized him, laid him down on a bench and went at him with birch rods.

Not wanting his coachman to know how he was being treated, the lord bore the pain in silence. They gave him a sound flogging and then the farmer said:

"Well, that's enough, I suppose!"

But the coachman heard him and shouted at the top of his voice:

"No, it's not! Let him have my share, too!"

So then they set to again and let the lord have the coachman's share as well.

And from that time on, so they say, the lord did not try to forge anything any more, not even a sizz!





THE BARON AND THE SHEPHERD

A young shepherd lad was once out with his herd while his father was ploughing the field nearby, for what else is a peasant to do in spring, when all of a sudden who should come riding up to them but the baron himself. With his pot belly and spindly legs and his stuck-up airs, he was a baron like any other, and he opened his eyes wide and gaped at the peasant.

"Hey, there, shepherd!" he called. "What is that

peasant yonder doing?"

"That's my father, my lord, and he's turning the earth's overcoat inside out, for it is badly worn on top," the shepherd replied.

"What does that mean?" asked the baron, surprised.

"Just this, my lord! My father is ploughing the field, for if he leaves it unploughed the foolish baron will never get a penny."

The baron was ill pleased with the shepherd's words. "What is your mother doing, my lad?" he asked.

"Baking bread that's already been eaten."

"What does that mean?" And the baron stared at

the shepherd, goggle-eyed.

"Just this, my lord! She borrowed some bread from the neighbours last week, and now she is baking some in order to give back what she owes. But no sooner has she done so than she'll borrow some again so that my father can plough your land."

"And what is your sister doing, my lad?"

"Weeping over lost hopes."

"What does that mean?"

"Just this, my lord! She was married last year and as happy as can be. But this year she weeps, for you've sent her husband off to the army and she has nothing to feed her young child with."

The baron was ill pleased with the shepherd's words. He glanced at his riding crop and then at the lad's stick, and, thinking, "You wait, I'll teach you how to speak like that to me!" said in kindly tones:

"Come to my house tomorrow, my lad, and I'll give you a rare treat to reward you for the way you

answered my questions."

"Thank you, my lord, I'll be glad to come," the lad replied.

On the next morning the baron had no sooner opened his eyes than there was the shepherd before him.

"Go to my cellar!" said the baron. "You will get

what is owing you there."

And he ordered his servant to lead the way and to take a whip with him.

The shepherd followed the servant into the cellar, and, seeing the whip sticking out from under his livery coat, knew at once what he was to expect.

Said the servant:

"See that wine cask, my lad? Well, just you go up to it, take out the spigot and drink your fill!"

"I don't know how to take out the spigot," the

shepherd replied. "Show me how it's done."

The servant bent over the cask, took out the spigot and stopped up the gimlet hole with his finger.

"That is how!" he said.

At this the shepherd snatched the whip from under the servant's coat and went at him with it, and the servant only stood there and did nothing, for he was afraid to take his finger out of the cask lest all his master's wine run out of it.

So soundly did the shepherd lay to that he soon had the servant stretched out by the cask more dead than alive. After that he picked a good ham for himself, slipped it under his shirt and left the cellar.

The baron stood gazing out of the window and he saw the shepherd walking away, holding on to what looked like a hump on his back. The baron was very pleased.

"Well, how did you like your treat?" he called.

"Very much, my lord, thank you. I'll never forget your kindness."

The shepherd left the yard, and the servant crawled out of the cellar barely alive. Oh, how angry the baron was! To be made a fool of by a mere

lad-why, it was more than anyone could stand.

On the next day the baron set out to find the shepherd and teach him a lesson. Now, the shepherd had been making gruel-he had put some fine-ground barley in a pot, cooked it till it was soft and then added milk to it—and was now carrying it in a wooden jug to the field for his father to have at dinner-time. He looked and he saw the baron, windbag that he was, come riding toward him on horseback with his long hunting crop in his hand. The shepherd knew very well what this could mean. He put the jug of gruel down as a tree-stump, ran to the blacksmith's, snatched a piece of red-hot iron out of the forge, and, running back again, threw it in the gruel. The gruel boiled up, and as it flowed over the edge of the jug, the shepherd began running round the tree-stump.

The baron came riding up and his eyes widened at the sight of the shepherd running round a tree-stump on which stood a boiling, steaming jug of gruel. This was a miracle indeed! For was the gruel not cooking

without a fire.

"What are you doing?" the baron asked.

"Cooking gruel, my lord."

"Without a fire?"

"Yes. All you have to do is put the jug on a tree-stump and run around it and whatever is in the jug will get cooked."

The baron tried the gruel and found that it was done and very good. He could hardly restrain himself,

so eager was he to get the jug for himself. How his friends would stare when he showed it them! Up till then he had only surprised them by his foolishness.

"Sell me your jug!" he begged.

But the shepherd would not, saying that he could not get on without it. Only when the baron had offered him a bag of gold and a horse in return for the jug did he finally agree to part with it.

"Here you are!" he said.

And giving the jug to the baron, he got on the baron's horse, jingled the baron's gold coins in his pocket and was off!

As for the baron, he felt very proud of himself, and, going back to his house, invited people from all over the countryside to come and look at the magic jug that he had got a foolish young peasant to give up to him.

He put the jug of gruel down on a tree-stump and bade a servant of his run around it in a circle. Round and round ran the servant till he was soaking wet with perspiration, but the gruel did not boil. The baron sent his coachman to help out the servant, and the two of them ran round the tree-stump together, and still the gruel did not boil. The baron then sent his huntsman to help them out, and the three of them ran round the tree-stump together, the servant first, gasping and fighting for breath as he ran, the coachman behind him and the huntsman behind the coachman, but the gruel was as cold as ever. There was nothing for it, so the baron himself now joined them, and the four of them began running round the tree-stump together, the baron behind the huntsman, the huntsman behind the coachman, the coachman behind the servant, and

